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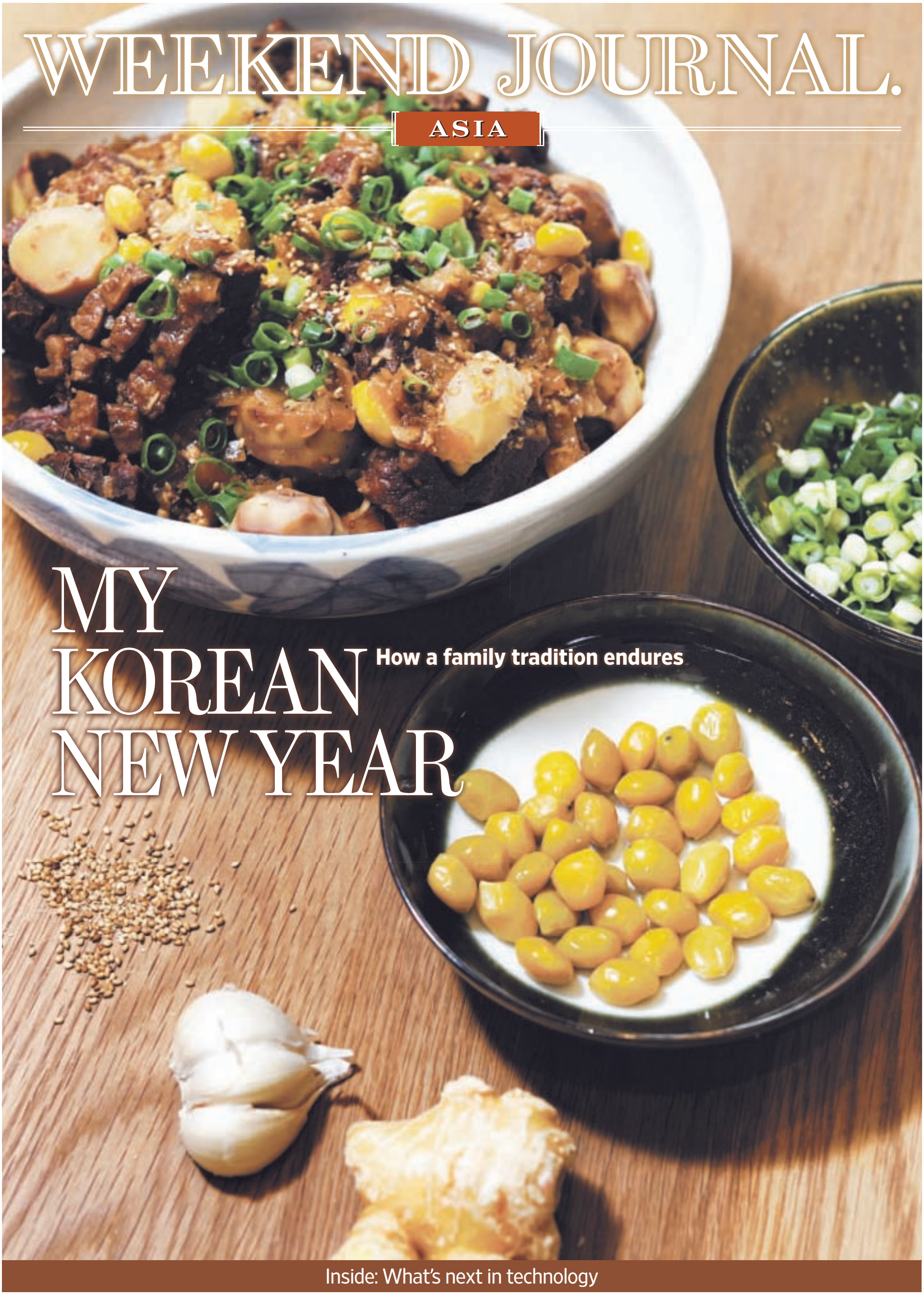

MY KOREAN NEW YEAR

How a family tradition endures

Inside: What's next in technology

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Cover: The ingredients for the Korean dish galbi jjim (Alfie Goodrich for The Wall Street Journal)
This page (left to right): Ahmad Zakii Anwar (Sash Alexander for The Wall Street Journal); Min Jin Lee, in blue, with her two sisters (Min Jin Lee); Hong Kong Ballet dancer Liu Miao-miao (Almond Chu)

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THE JOURNAL CROSSWORD / Edited by Mike Shenk

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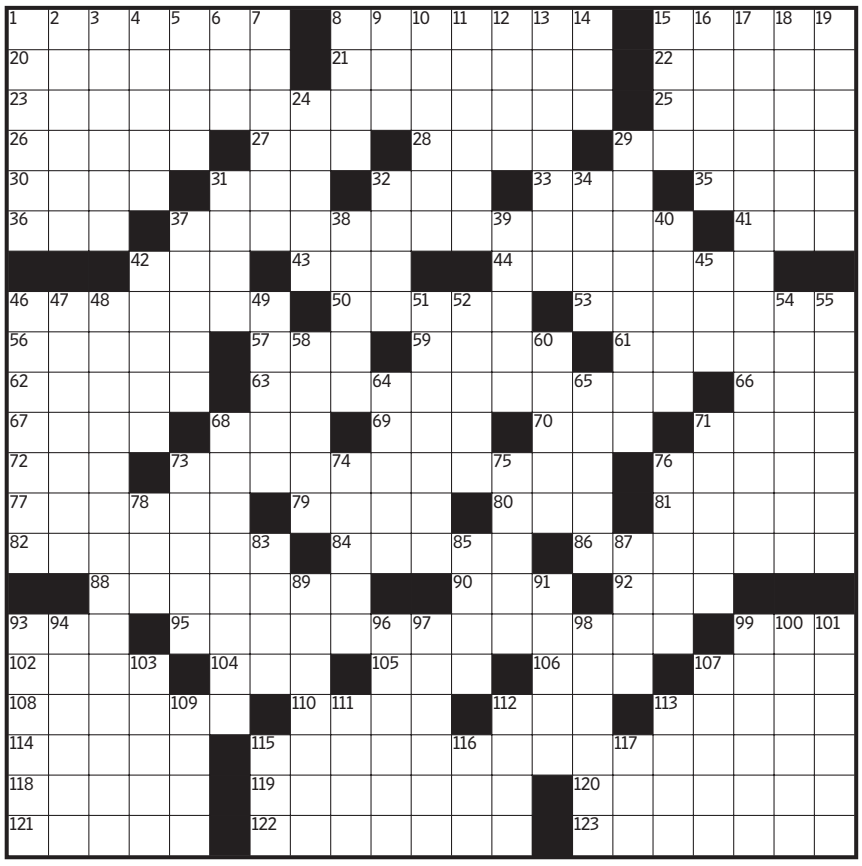
Brainstorming / by Myles Callum



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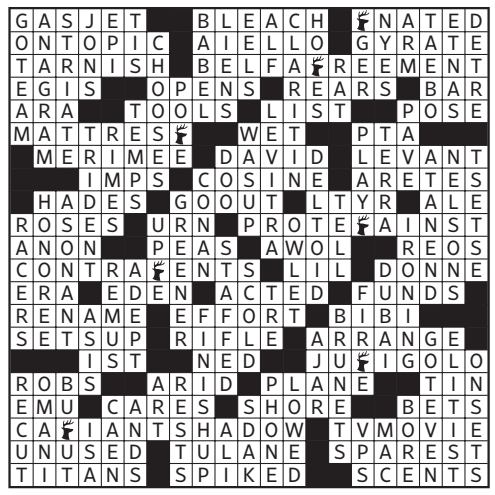

‘In’ is out

Must-have trends are très passé; now everything is in style

By Christina Binkley

David Wolfe has been analyzing style trends for 41 years. But earlier this month, Mr. Wolfe, creative director of the Doneger Group consultants, stood up in a room full of retail executives and told them: “There are no more trends. Everything is in style.”

Even as the fashion press gears up for an orgy of trend-spotting at New York fashion week, which starts Feb. 11, many observers feel Mr. Wolfe is right: We’ve reached the end of the trend as the guiding stricture in fashion. The “must-have” currently being attached to certain styles—The trench coat! The one-shoulder dress! Metallics!—is little more than a marketing pitch.

The trench coat has been “in” for the past five years, and will be hot next year, too. Indeed, it’s a safe bet that next month we’ll see every possible length of skirt, width of pant and cut of blouse walk the runways—sometimes all in the same show.

Rather than fuss about skirt lengths or the season’s silhouette, people now dress the way they see themselves, choosing looks that flatter their bodies and fit their lifestyles. Most of us dress with our social groups or professions, rather than fashion trends, using clothes to flash messages about who we are.

A chief executive in the tech business may don Gap chinos and a blazer for work, while investment-banking chiefs remain loyal to their Zegna suits. Others dress according to the mores of their own personal tribes: If you don’t dress steampunk, you may not even know it’s a style (think 19th-century mad scientist in leather waistcoat with goggles and a pocket watch).

There was a time when luxury retailers Stanley Marcus and Andrew Goodman, of Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman, determined what women would buy each season. That was back when nerds weren’t cool and, for some reason, a lady’s coat had to be longer than her skirt. Women who wanted to be fashionable bought the fashions whether they wanted to wear miniskirts or not. Though fashions changed, the primacy of trends didn’t: Until just a few years ago, no self-respecting teenager would have been caught in the wrong denim wash. Part of the fun of watching old movies was seeing the funny old fashions.

Now, most old film fashions look pretty current to me, from Katharine Hepburn’s swishy man-tailored pants in 1940’s “Philadelphia Story” to those skinny ski-lodge capris in 1963’s “The Pink Panther.”

“Trends are diluted,” says Doris Raymond, owner of the Los Angeles vintage store The Way We Wore. That’s because designers have in the past two decades “referenced every possible fashion period for inspiration.”

The style consensus has been splintering for nearly a decade as workplaces have grown more casual and fields like tech have pursued their own tribal dress codes. Meanwhile, young celebrities have championed a mix-and-match aesthetic. “The industry is fragmenting, reflecting consumers’ desire to create their own style,” says Marie Driscoll, director of consumer discretionary retail coverage for Standard & Poor’s equity research.

Retailers such as Zara, H&M and Forever 21 have contributed to “fast fashion,” gobbling their way through looks. Earlier this month in New York, H&M sale racks displayed blurry-print floral blouses based on designer looks that were shown on the runways in September. When those designers’ own clothes arrive in stores in March, H&M customers may well view the originals with déjà vu. Runway looks are now accessible to everyone—but their cachet disappears a lot faster.

I welcome democratic fashion as one of the many benefits of being alive in 2010. But it can be a headache for the fashion industry, which once could depend on trends to lure customers and still maintain a trend-spotting infrastructure to figure out who will buy what. Predicting trends is “more challenging every year,” says Sharon Graubard, a trend analyst with fashion consultancy Stylesight. “With fewer ‘must-have’ items, retailers and designers have to try harder,” she says.

Some new retailers are letting customers dictate the details. “Fashion has traditionally been this top-down industry, but we saw that technology” could allow consumers to choose their own details, says Abby Holtz, director of marketing for indiCustom, a San Francisco retailer of custom jeans and shirts that launched in 2008. Its indiDenim brand lets shoppers pick fabric, leg shape, pockets and other details for customized jeans.

But there’s one fashion segment where trend is increasingly dominant: menswear, where pleats are “out” and trim, flat-front pants are “in,” says Andy Gilchrist, author of “The Encyclopedia of Men’s Clothes” and founder of the “Ask Andy” Web site. “It seems,” he says, “that the designers and retailers are trying to get men into that ‘old’ women’s fashion-trend cycle.”

The evolution of ‘in’

Fashion was long driven by dominant looks. But recently, designers have been offering a variety of hemlines and silhouettes.

Photo Illustration by WSJ; Reuters (photo); Timeline: Photofest (’60s); MCV Photo (’90s); Everett Collection (6)

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Above, Ahmad Zakii Anwar, known simply as 'Zakii,' in his home gallery with his own 'Standing Man 1'; below, a Javanese kris scabbard in the Ladrangan style.

Sash Alexander for The Wall Street Journal (4); Ahmad Zakii Anwar (painting)

THE COLLECTOR:

Ahmad Zakii Anwar

By John Krich

Ahmad Zakii Anwar, known as "Zakii" to colleagues and countrymen, has become the main man of Malaysian contemporary art by remaining its odd man out.

The 54-year-old artist with the trademark white curls and sprig of a goatee has had shows around the world—including in Japan, Germany, Australia and Singapore—helping lead a boom in auction prices and recognition for what has been one of Southeast Asia's smaller and less-known artistic communities.

But Zakii has done it by taking his own path, "refusing to draw a fence around myself, always engaging other traditions," he says. Most of Malaysia's modern artists pursued a watered-down abstract expressionism, with many following somewhat controversial and ill-defined Islamic admonitions against depicting the human figure. But Zakii has made his métier and obsession large, intensely charged, hypergraphic portraits, in both paint and charcoal. Earlier works referenced traditional masks, but most recently and memorably he's produced male nudes that combine strength with introspection.

"It's painting the body from the inside out," the artist says.

The thumbnail sketch

Home: Johor Bahru, Malaysia
Signature style: Large, hypergraphic portraits
What he collects: Krises—traditional daggers of the Malay archipelago

He has likewise eschewed the usual grab-bag quests for cultural identity and the easy pop symbolism that marks a lot of Malaysian protest art, though in practice he is perhaps the leading social activist in the arts community. In 1994 he founded Life Zone, which has pioneered community homes for AIDS patients and a needle-exchange program for addicts to prevent the spread of infection. He continues to personally oversee it today, mixing time in the studio with the challenge of supervising a staff made up mostly of recovering addicts rescued from the street.

"I'd rather do social work than proclaim it in my art," Zakii quips.

Activism is a family tradition. The artist's father, Haji Anwar bin Abdul Malik, was a prominent politician credited with coining the name of the political party that has held power in Malaysia since the country's birth in 1957: United Malays National Organization, or UNMO. And his sister Zainah Anwar started and for two decades ran Sisters in Islam, Malaysia's

Right, a Javanese kris; the waves in the blade are called 'lok,' and the number is usually odd; far right, five krises with their scabbards: a Malay kris from Kelantan, the hilt and scabbard carved by the late Kelantanese master Nik Rashiddin; a kris Tanjung from southern Thailand; a kris Panjang, also called a long kris (used for executions, Zakii says—the blade driven vertically into the heart); a Malay kris from Trengganu; a Bugis kris from Sulawesi, Indonesia

most visible and persistent champion of women's rights within a Muslim context.

Zakii also broke from Malaysia's arts mainstream by leaving Kuala Lumpur and the country's most influential art scene at the age of 32 and returning to the leafy hillside in Johor Bahru where he had grown up. (He had moved to Kuala Lumpur at age 17 to study, and stayed on to work in advertising as a means of supporting his painting.)

Zakii jokes that moving back in with the family was an economic necessity, but one look at his childhood home, a Malay-style house that he has modernized and expanded with huge wooden decks, reveals a peaceful refuge and sanctuary.

"I can stay here until the world ends," he says with a chuckle of his cozily cramped, book-lined third-floor studio. Like much of his work, Zakii's house quietly brings the best of Malay handicraft into a 21st-century context. (Higher up the hill, he has upgraded a second building; it serves both as storage for his own paintings and a gallery that promotes the handful of other artists from Johor state.)

Antique objects, carvings and carpets are everywhere, yet never in a jumble. One type of item keeps popping up to predominate, on the glass shelves of specially made display cases or low-lying tables both indoors and out. Oddly enough, this groundbreaking artist has long been drawn to the mythology and craftsmanship of his home culture's most powerful traditional artifact: the kris (sometimes spelled "keris"). The dagger of choice across the greater Malay archipelago, it is said to have both ceremonial and spiritual powers.

What about the kris first attracted you?

All weapons have two factors which I find extremely interesting. One is they are deadly. These are tools made for killing. The other part is that they are all beautifully made—so there is this mixture of beauty and deadliness. If something is just beautiful alone, it gets too yucky, too sweet. But when you mix that with its opposite, with something that contradicts it, you create something really intriguing.

How did you first start collecting?

The first one I bought was from a friend of mine, very cheap. I'd always go to his house to look at them and finally he gave me the chance to choose one. Later, I went on my own to buy and got cheated a few times—sold fakes because I didn't know enough. The "ivory"...was fiberglass. Shops will always say they are 300 years old, most might be 80 or 90. Good lessons in life are always expensive.

How much do they cost?

The world of the kris collector is a small world, but a fascinating world. There are people who are crazy about it. Once I asked the ticket-seller of the palace in Yogyakarta; he immediately called someone to replace him. He took me to his house to show me his collection and they were very costly. The prices can run up to several hundred thousand dollars.

What makes you choose your pieces?

It's not just a piece of metal. You feel a connection, just like when you meet certain people. With the kris it's the same. If I see 10, there will be one that I have an affinity for—not necessarily the most beautiful. I don't like things too ornate, I like the simpler ones. Not embedded with jewels. And I've switched to the Malay kris from the Indonesian. They are rarer, harder to find. Many have Koranic inscriptions; the carving is a craft in itself. It's made by an *empu*, a blacksmith, but not an ordinary one. In Indonesia, if you are a nobleman, and you are marrying a woman of lower social rank, you don't have to attend the wedding, you can just send your kris.

And you commission them to be made for your station in life, but also for your character—because the kris has a soul. With some kris, the empu has to go on a fast, a bathing ritual, with many prayers, chants and verses from the Koran. When it's done, he will sleep with the kris and receive a dream that indicates whether his work is successful. Otherwise he has to melt it down and redo it.

Where do you find them?

Mostly from other collectors, up in Terengganu, or in people's homes. If you're lucky, maybe in a flea market.

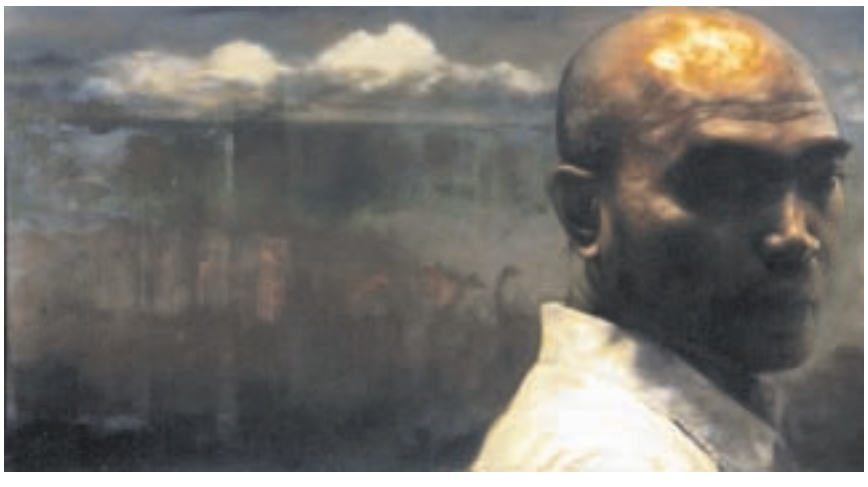
How do you maintain them?

If you are keeping them, you have to adhere to certain rituals, certain months to clean them—with lime and tamarind. And they are scented—because the spirit in the kris feeds on scents. Plus the Javanese put on arsenic. The blade is a mixture of iron and nickel that creates a pattern and the arsenic makes the contrast stronger in the pattern. Normally, I'll just do it when they are rusty. And I stick the blade into a pineapple for a few hours or a day.

And you're not afraid of their powers?

A lot of people, Malays, are afraid of the kris. But I find them simply fascinating. I suppose I've got around 50. I used to have them hanging all over the place, but with the kids growing up, I caught them playing with them. So I keep them safely. But I've never painted a kris. I just don't feel that I can do justice to them.

John Krich is a Bangkok-based writer.



Zakii works big: 'Witness,' a 2005 oil painting, measures 120 centimeters high and 180 centimeters long.

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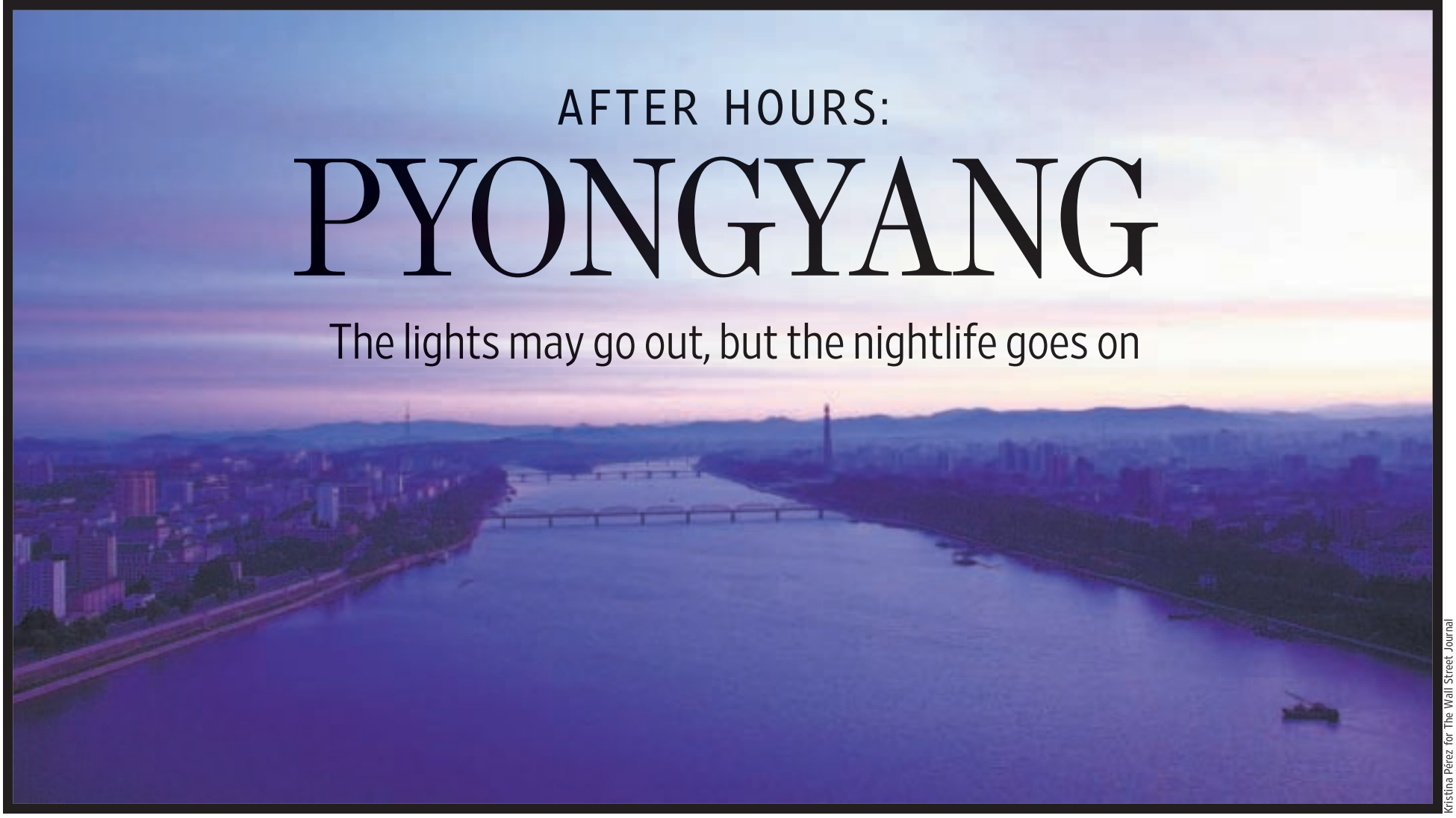
▶ To see more of Ahmad Zakii Anwar's krises and his art, click on **Asia.WSJ.com**.



Kristina Pérez for The Wall Street Journal

AFTER HOURS: PYONGYANG

The lights may go out, but the nightlife goes on

By Kristina Pérez

Pyongyang

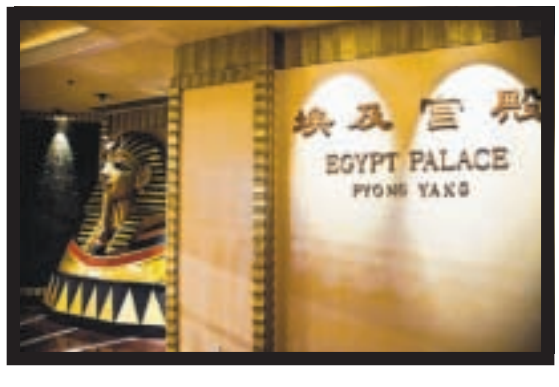
In North Korea's capital, "after dark" means something different than in most places its size. Nightfall in electricity-starved Pyongyang is more like nightfall in the middle of the ocean than like nightfall in a city of two million people. Seen from space, North Korea is a black spot set against the light pollution of neighboring China and South Korea.

For all that, Pyongyang doesn't actually shut down when the sun sets. To serve its trickle of visitors, the city offers its own version of nightlife. Besides foreign envoys shuttling in for nuclear discussions and businesspeople looking to make deals, about 2,000 Western tourists come to Pyongyang each year, many, like me, to attend the famous, stadium-size show called Arirang. It's a spectacle of mass gymnastics, dance, military marching and incredible animated pictures created by thousands of people flipping colored cards.

The number of visitors could edge up. According to Koryo Tours, a Beijing-based agency specializing in trips to North Korea, the government has notified it that more Americans will be let in during the non-Arirang season (the show generally runs from August to October).

For tourists, the days are filled with sights that have what ruler Kim Jong Il calls "high ideological content." (A government-supplied guide and minder comes along, day and night.) High on the list is the Mansudae Grand Monument, boasting a massive statue of the country's late founder, Kim Il Sung, where visitors lay flowers and line up to bow in an orderly fashion. Another must-see is the USS Pueblo, a U.S. Navy intelligence ship captured off the coast of North Korea in 1968; conducting the tour the day we visited was an elderly man dressed in navy whites who was one of the sailors in the original boarding party. And then there's the underground train system, with its mosaics of peasants revolting and huge chandeliers meant to look like stars.

Above, rosy-fingered dawn on the Taedong River, with the Tower of the Juche Idea visible just beyond the bridge; left, the red star rising in the diorama room of the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum.



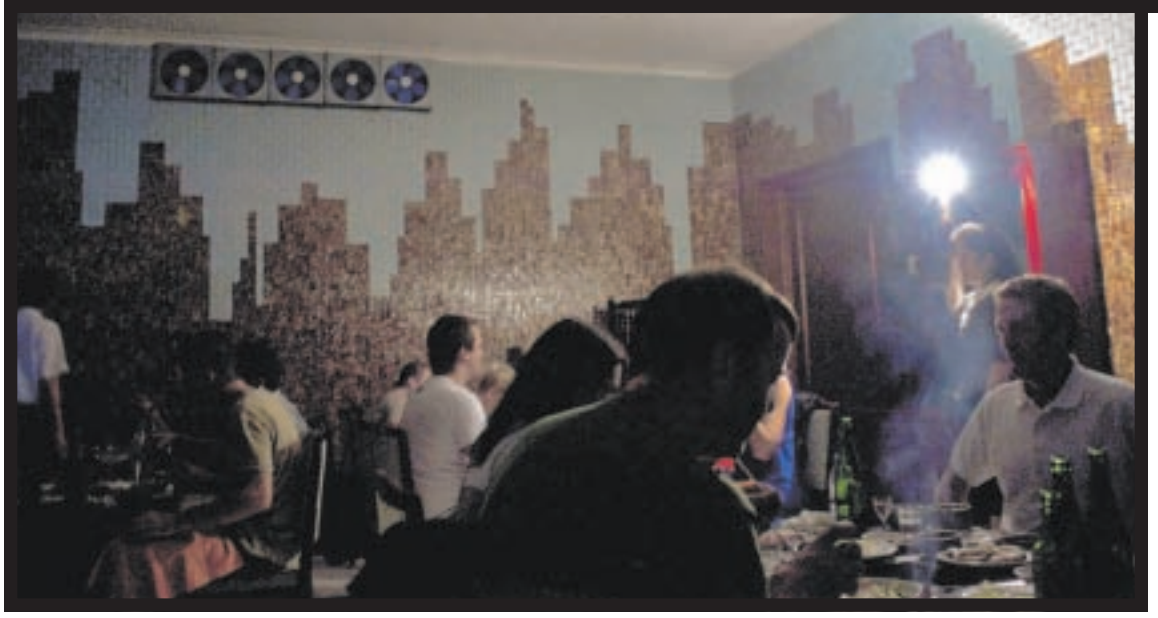
The Egypt Palace casino in Yanggakdo Hotel, which offers slot machines and card games including blackjack, is generally open until 4 a.m.

But there's also the unexpected, like the Pyolmuri Teahouse, a Western-style cafe whose name translates roughly as "constellation of the stars." Opened in 2005 with the help of the nonprofit Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the cafe—equipped, as it proudly points out, with German-made ovens and Italian pasta-making machines—offers a tasty apple pie, a surprisingly decent cappuccino and a great chance to people-watch. Egyptian telecommuncations provider Orascom brought mobile technology to North Korea last year, and now demurely dressed teenage girls are accessorizing their *hanboks*, or traditional Korean dresses, with platform shoes and colorful, decorative, straps on their cellphones. (We tourists had surrendered our phones at the airport, along with our passports; they were returned just before we boarded the return flight.)

As evening approaches, take a stroll (minder in tow) along the deserted embankment of the Taedong River to Kim Il Sung Square. From this vantage point, you can photograph some picture-postcard views while it's still light. An ideal place to watch the sunset is from the Tower of the Juche Idea, named for the country's official ideology, a word typically translated as "self-reliance." The 170-meter tower, built on the occasion of Kim Il Sung's 70th birthday, is said to contain one white stone block for each day of his life to that point. (He died in 1994, at the age of 82, and while his son is now ruler, the elder Kim is "eternal president.")

From the top there's a panoramic view over the capital out to the surrounding mountains. The lack of cars on the roads—vehicles aren't freely available for purchase—and scarcity of heavy industry means the air is remarkably clear.

Then it's time to think about where to have dinner. Don't dawdle; most Pyongyang eateries generally



When a power outage darkened Mangyongdae KITC restaurant, the waitresses were quick to distribute huge flashlights, one for each table.

close by 9 p.m. The choices range quite widely, from hot pot at Chongryu Hot Pot restaurant to roast duck at Pyongyang Duck Barbeque Restaurant No. 1 to Macanese fare such as egg tarts at the imaginatively named Macau Restaurant.

Whatever you pick, forget dining by candlelight. Here, it's more likely to be by flashlight. On my first night, just as my tour group was tucking into a typical Korean meal of *naengmyon* (cold noodles) and *bulgogi* (barbecued beef) at Mangyongdae KITC restaurant, the lights went out. But the waitresses have come to expect power outages, and before we knew it they were coming around with huge flashlights, one for each table. The room lights still hadn't come back on by the time we left about an hour later.

Checking out the city's after-dinner scene is easy: There's one nightclub and one casino, both located in the same place, the 1,001-room Yanggakdo Hotel, one of about a dozen hotels where foreigners are allowed to stay. (All the tourist hotels do offer some evening activities—like a karaoke bar—but the Yanggakdo is the place to be.) You won't see any locals here; the entertainment venues are off limits to North Korean citizens.

Start at the aptly named Revolving Restaurant, also known as the Swivel Restaurant, on the 47th floor. It has all the glamour of a 1980s airport lounge, but still attracts businesspeople and Russian exchange students. Grab a seat by the window and admire the lack of city lights as you circle around. Order a serving of soju. Traditionally made from rice, although sometimes also from acorns, it's the national liquor.

Less-adventurous travelers could sample some of the country's homegrown beer. The best-known brands are Ryongsong, Ponghak and Taedonggang. Taedonggang, which last year was bizarrely the subject of an advertisement on state TV, is made using equipment that once produced the likes of Brown's Bitter and Mann's Best Ale in Trowbridge, England. North Korea bought the shut-down brewery from its U.K. owner and had it dismantled and shipped over in 2000. The restaurant stays open until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m, or when the last customer leaves.

Sufficiently mellowed, head for the nightclub on the lower ground floor. You can groove to the beat of familiar pop tunes from the '70s and '80s (was that the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive," or too much soju?) until about 3:30 a.m. if there's enough business; otherwise the staff close the doors at about 1:30 a.m.

If you're still not ready to call it a night and you're feeling lucky, pop next door to the Egypt Palace casino. Replete with slot machines and tables for card games including blackjack, the casino is generally open until 4 a.m. But if you aren't staying in the hotel, how long you can play depends on what kind of deal you can strike with your minder.

After that, there is only the 7 a.m. "workers' siren," a citywide wake-up call. It might serve to tell you whether you had too much soju.

On your last day in Pyongyang, by the way, brace yourself for one final, unexpected spending opportunity, befitting a state eager for hard currency. We'd already experienced one big earner, the shop selling souvenir stamps (such as an envelope bearing a Mona Lisa stamp, postmarked on the day of issue, about $7) and hand-painted propaganda posters (such as one showing flying pens attacking former U.S. President Richard Nixon). Now some tourism officials rushed onto our airport-bound bus with something more modern: videos of our three-day stay, going for just under $30. I couldn't resist.

Courtesy of the advertising department of Korea International Travel Co., the 45-minute video compact disk features me and my 24 traveling companions as we played tourist, drinking beer at lunch and riding the escalators of the underground-train stations. These scenes are interspersed with footage of 80,000 performers at the Arirang mass games, and the whole thing is set to a rousing soundtrack mixing modernized folk songs, swelling orchestral passages and the worst elevator music I've ever heard.

Thankfully, there is no record of my night out. At least some things that happen in Pyongyang, stay in Pyongyang.

Kristina Pérez is an Asia-based writer.

Skipping lunch

The new model for high-end golf clubs: Focus on the game, forget the extras

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

The earliest golf clubhouses in the U.S., like most of their predecessors in Great Britain, were golf-only affairs. The elegant Shinnecock Hills clubhouse on New York's Long Island, designed by Stanford White in the early 1890s, was the first U.S. structure purpose-built for golf, and it still keeps watch, relatively modest in size, over the great links-style course there.

It didn't take long, however, for most golf clubs to morph into country clubs with stupendous clubhouses that offered fine dining and access to other recreational pursuits. (Country clubs built around hunting, boating and carriage-driving actually predated golf in the U.S. by several years.) There have always been a few like Shinnecock, however, that kept strictly to golf, and such pure golf clubs are making something of a comeback these days. For people whose primary interest is golf, they suddenly make a lot more economic sense than do the grand old behemoths (about which more later).

You could see the trend beginning in the early 2000s, just as the golf-course building boom was ending, with the opening of such clubs as Dallas National in Texas, The Dye Preserve in Florida, Friar's Head on Long Island, and the Chechessee Creek Club in South Carolina. All of these have relatively small, understated clubhouses, superb golf courses (those at the last two designed by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore), and no swimming pools or tennis courts. It's all about the golf.

Whisper Rock in Arizona, which opened in 2004, is another good example. It's expensive, with initiation fees running now at $130,000, and, as an all-male club, politically incorrect. (Women and children are allowed to play golf there several days a week.) But its casual atmosphere (club motto: "It's all about the hang") and two highly ranked courses have attracted an enviable membership that includes something like 40 current or former PGA Tour players, all of whom pay the full initiation fee and regular dues. During a recent lunch visit there, I spotted Paul Casey, Gary McCord and Peter Kostis.

The low-handicap membership and high expense makes Whisper Rock something of an outlier, but the clubhouse, confidently done in Arizona-desert style, is to the point. To the left of the entrance is an intimate, open locker room. To the right is the grill room with large circular tables. Except for the pro shop, that's about it. Architecturally, everything feeds out to the putting green, the driving range and the courses beyond.

None of these pared-down golf clubs has anything approaching fine dining. "The big formal dining room, where men wear jackets and ties and women get somewhat dressed up, just doesn't work anymore," said Richard Diedrich, a clubhouse architect from Atlanta. Yet most of the big, old-style golf clubs and country clubs are saddled with huge dining facilities. Joe Webster, who developed and manages The Dye Preserve, put it in dollars-and-cents terms: "Most clubs that are open for dinner at night are losing seven figures on their food and beverage operations." There's no way to know this for sure, but it jibes with anecdotal lore.

Those losses are folded into dues. Mr. Webster said that a typical club with 300 members might spend $1.5 million a year on course maintenance, or $5,000 a member. "Everything you pay in dues above that is basically so you can have lunch," he said. Lunch is his shorthand for the cost of supporting a kitchen, other services such as the locker rooms, and clubhouse staff—essentially, all the non-golf amenities that a club offers.

Whisper Rock; Nick Novelli (Medinah)

Above, Whisper Rock in Arizona is a high-end club with a pared-down clubhouse—grill room, locker room, pro shop; left, the traditional, opulent ballroom at Medinah Country Club in Illinois

Dues at Dye Preserve, which has a 15,000-square-foot clubhouse (and is not open for dinner), are $9,000 a year. "So that's $4,000 for lunch," he said. Another Florida club, with a 50,000-square-foot clubhouse plus a pool and tennis, charges $21,000 in dues. "So those members are paying $16,000 to eat and for the other stuff," he said. Yet another club in the area, built in the go-go 1990s as a real-estate play, has an even bigger clubhouse and is operating under bankruptcy protection.

Certainly there will always be some people able and willing to pay for the super-high-end experience, as well as demand for reasonably priced, family-oriented country clubs. But smaller economic models, whether for full-bore country clubs or stand-alone golf clubs, are likely to dominate if and when new private development picks up again.

The grand old heaps remain, though, and many can be explored in Mr. Diedrich's recently-published coffee-table book, "The 19th Hole: Architecture of the Golf Clubhouse." It includes photographs and site-plan sketches of 62 of the most famous and sumptuous U.S. clubhouses, some of them quite recent.

Many of the great early clubhouses were modeled after the English country estates, complete with liveried staff, that the rising upper-middle classes in America aspired to but couldn't afford. Soon, clubhouse architects struck out in new directions. Medinah Country Club west of Chicago, with its colorful Moorish domes and Byzantine structure, is downright imperial. The iconic stone Winged Foot clubhouse in suburban New York, completed in the 1920s, was expressly designed to "inspire spiritual feelings."

As golf spread, regional vernaculars developed. The Mediterranean vision of developer Addison Mizner, with terra-cotta roofs and wrought-iron elements, swept through Florida. Desert Highlands in Arizona, from the 1980s, incorporated ancient pueblo structures into a design that melded almost seamlessly into the surrounding desert rock formations. In the mountain West, timber beams and stacked raw stone became the standard.

It's striking, given the large available budgets and the presumed desire of developers to make a name for themselves, how few U.S. clubs ever risked avant-garde designs. There have been a few recently, notably The Bridge, again on Long Island, and Liberty National on New York Harbor, but most of the interiors look like extensions of the living room. Comfy chairs surrounding a big communal fireplace seem almost to be a requirement for clubhouses, even in the heat of the Deep South.

The most effective overall designs, Mr. Diedrich said, are those that best integrate the clubhouse and the golf course—terraces, for example, that offer sweeping views of the finishing holes. From the golfers' point of view out on the course, the clubhouse, especially when it's all aglow at twilight, is home port. "That relationship between the structure and the course is the essence, that's the constant, and I hope it never changes," Mr. Diedrich said.

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WHAT'S NEXT

By Steve Mollman

Another in a series of articles pondering the shape of things to come

These days, millions of people tote a camera-equipped phone that packs serious sensor capabilities.

For instance, the latest iPhone—or handset based on Google's Android platform—can pinpoint your location, thanks to assisted GPS. It also knows how the phone is being tilted in your hand and in what direction you're pointing it, among other things.

With the flood of new apps that leverage such features, there's no stopping the layers of information you can receive on your smartphone.

The Sekai Camera app (free on iTunes) lets you share "air tags"—virtual sticky-notes tied to a specific location—around Tokyo with other users of the same app. Say you pass by a cool bookstore that's been tagged because it has a great collection of foreign magazines. View the shop through your phone and the tag pops up on the screen. With the app Nearest Tube ($1.99), arrows on the handset guide you to the nearest underground rail station in London. And apps such as Tweet 360 and TwittARound (both 99 U.S. cents) can tell you—whichever direction you face—who within your Twitter network is up ahead.

Welcome to the new world of augmented reality, where through inventive apps, virtual information tied to real-world locations—when you view them through your smartphone—appears on your handset screen.

Of course, it's nothing new to Adrian David Cheok. With a penchant for tinkering—as a youth in Australia, he loved to disassemble and reassemble everything from electronic toys to his Apple II computer—and a comfort level with different realities (he has Chinese-Malaysian roots on his father's side and Greek on his mother's), Mr. Cheok found himself drawn early on to the field of augmented reality, a once-obscure discipline that is now of-the-moment.

Today, the 38-year-old is director of the National University of Singapore's Mixed Reality Lab, where he strives to inspire his Ph.D. students with his inimitable spirit of tinkering. He also doubles as a professor at Keio University in Tokyo. It's a long-distance juggling act that has him, his Japanese wife and their 3-year-old daughter splitting their time between Singapore and Japan.

Weekend Journal Asia recently caught a few minutes with the busy Mr. Cheok to talk about his life and where augmented reality might take us next.

Where do you like to vacation?

Last year, I traveled nearly 200,000 miles, and that's been pretty constant for the last five or six years. So now I really don't like to travel. I hate airports and airplanes now. If I have any free time, I spend it with my daughter.

Do you prefer Japan or Singapore?

They both have pros and cons. The research support is amazing in Singapore. It's a nice and easy city to live in. Japan is more interesting from a lifestyle perspective. There's so much traditional and modern culture.

How do you view your role in the field?

I would like my Ph.D. students to be the inventors and to make the next stage of invention. And if I can make some benefit to society, especially young people, using AR [augmented reality], that's one of my big goals now. I really think this next generation is totally different. They're the first generation to grow up totally digital. I think that we can make really new kinds of learning, so playing and learning become one. I think that's what I want to do at the next stage.

What's next for augmented reality?

In two years, it'll be almost standard for the smartphone. You point your phone at the bus stop and see when the next bus is coming.

What about further into the future?

In 2015, we may see that we can do AR directly onto our...spectacles or sunglasses. Then you don't need to look at the phone screen anymore. Let's say you're at a party and you know you've met someone before but you can't quite remember. If you've got this tiny display...you can look at someone to see who they are, when was the last time you met them, where you met them last. It's a kind of augmented memory.

After 10 years time we'll be able to have some kind of direct brain interface. Now you use a Web browser to search Google or something, but if you really can project directly onto your eyes [through a contact lens] or direct information into your brain, you maybe can just walk on the street, think of a question, and directly get the answer from Google without any external device. Virtual reality can merge with our brains.

Steve Mollman is a writer based in Asia.

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MY KOREAN NEW YEAR

How a family tradition endures

By Min Jin Lee

My finest hour as a Korean took place on a *Seollal* morning, the first day of Korean New Year's, in January 1976.

I was 7 years old, and my family still lived in Seoul, where my two sisters and I had been born. Seollal, the New Year's Day of the lunar calendar, is one of South Korea's most significant holidays. The busy nation rests for three days for family reunions, New Year's greetings and scrumptious feast dishes.

The holiday is celebrated in similar fashion by many Asian communities that follow the lunar calendar, from the Vietnamese who observe Tet to the Chinese who sometimes refer to it as Spring Festival to the Koreans and their Seollal. This year the Lunar New Year begins on Feb. 14.

I had been given an especially lovely traditional *hanbok* to wear that year. The short jacket was a creamy satin trimmed in blue, closing in the front with a tricky sash that my mother had to tie for me. The front panel of the blue floor-skimming skirt was hand-embroidered with red plum blossoms. My shoes were like rainbow-striped miniature canoes. Of the three girls, I was the shy, middle one with wispy hair and a squint, but in that dress, I felt as bold as an ornamental red-cheeked Korean bride doll.

My sisters Myung Jin and Sang Jin, ages 9 and 5, were equally resplendent in their hanboks, and together we raced to the house of our uncle, Lee Ji Choon, heedless of our mother's instructions that young ladies did not run this way. My mom, Mi Hwa, and my dad, Boo Choon, walked leisurely behind us wearing their woolen coats over their hanboks.

The three of us girls had wound our voluminous skirts against our winter-chapped legs to run the 10 blocks from our house to Uncle's—puffs of frozen white breath trailing behind us.

We opened the front gate, cut through the stone courtyard and burst into the house—its delectable aromas embracing us. The day before, Mom had gone food shopping with my aunt, Jung Soon Duk, and all night, the two sisters-in-law had cooked the Seollal breakfast with all the feast classics: *galbi jjim* (stewed short ribs), *japchae* (sweet-potato-starch noodles with julienne vegetables and beef), *modeum jeon* (assorted meat, fish and vegetables pan fried in a light egg batter), *bindaetteok* (mung-bean-flour pancakes), *namul* (seasoned vegetables), *mandu* (dumplings) and of course, the inviolable New Year's Day dish: *tteokguk* (rice-cake soup). In a way, *tteokguk* is to Seollal what the cake is to the birthday.

According to Seollal tradition, a Korean has to eat a bowl of the bone-white soup filled with coin-shaped slices of chewy rice cake in order to age a year—a ritual far more appreciated early in life. The garnishes vary by household; my family topped our soup with seasoned shredded beef, toasted laver (thin sheets of processed seaweed), minced scallion and ribbons of omelette. Fluffy, homemade dumplings floated in our version, making it *tteok mandu guk*. Aunt's finely lacquered dining table was covered with gorgeous hillocks of food, and from the kitchen came sounds of the stirring of pots and the crispy rounds of mung-bean pancakes coming off the griddle.

But none of us could eat just yet.

At last, our parents, the slowpokes, arrived. Uncle lit up when he saw my father. Uncle was 27 and Dad was 16 when they left their northern hometown of Wonsan to flee the Communists in the winter of 1950. Thinking they'd be away for only a few days, they found themselves unable to return. Uncle had left behind a pregnant wife and never saw her again or met his child. Aunt was his second wife, with whom he had four children. Between the two brothers, they had lost contact with a father, mother, wife, three brothers, two sisters and an unborn baby.

At last it was time. My four cousins, already teenagers, and us little girls gathered in the immaculate living room with the grown-ups. The floor, made of clay and stone covered with traditional yellow oiled paper, was toasty from the old-style Korean *ondol* system that drew its under-floor warmth from the cooking stove in the kitchen. Its surface had been wiped clean by hand, and there wasn't a speck of dirt or a stray black hair to be seen. The walls were lined with black lacquered chests inlaid with mother of pearl. Jade ornaments hung from the chests' gleaming hardware like earrings on a beautiful woman.

As the family elders, Aunt and Uncle sat down on square silk floor cushions on one side of the room like monarchs, while the rest of us huddled standing on the other. The New Year's bowing would begin. The male bow is a kowtow with a head knock to the ground, and the female bow is a royal curtsy requiring some fancy footwork. First, Mom and Dad bowed, saying in unison, "May you receive abundant fortune in the New Year." Next, each of us kids bowed separately, following a strict age hierarchy, and repeated the same greeting.

Besides the awesome food, we kids looked forward to Seollal all year long, because there was no greater opportunity for cash-raising.

Clockwise from the top: a bowl of tteok mandu guk; adding garnishes, the final step; Min Jin Lee at a Korean grocery in Tokyo selecting the tofu to use in the dumplings—the mandu in her tteok mandu guk.

Alfie Goodrich for The Wall Street Journal (3); Min Jin Lee (family photos)

Left, Min Jin Lee, in blue, and her sisters celebrate the New Year in Seoul, 1976; below, Ms. Lee's parents, Mi Hwa Lee (left) and Boo Choon Lee, do likewise in New Jersey, 2005.

Upon the completion of a bow, we'd receive an elder's blessing and money. A neighborhood bowing tour to honor the elders could yield a handsome purse.

My cousins and my older sister Myung Jin finished in a jiffy and collected their rewards.

Uncle and Aunt waited for me to bow. Uncle wore a traditional jacket in a dove-gray jacquard silk with indigo silk pants. He smiled at me, hoping that I would do well. His face was like my father's but with a wider chin and deeper grooves on his forehead.

I gathered the sides of my blue skirt with both hands, stepped forward gingerly on my right foot, bent each knee to the appropriate angles, lowered my noggin to the ground, and repeated the New Year's greeting that I had been practicing privately in my head all morning.

"Whaaaaaaaaaaahhh," Uncle gasped with admiration.

It was over, and I had not made a mistake.

"That was so beautiful that you get double the money," Uncle said.

He handed me an envelope that must have been prepared earlier, then withdrew more bills from his pocket.

"Whaaaaaaaaaaahhh," everyone echoed. Double money had never happened before.

Five weeks later, my family and I landed at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. We were no longer just Koreans, but became the immigrant variety.

That first year, we moved into a two-room rented apartment in Elmhurst in the New York City borough of Queens. In Seoul, Dad had worked as a marketing executive for a cosmetics company, and Mom had taught piano to the neighborhood children, but in America, they joined the lower end of the merchant class and ran a newspaper kiosk on 28th Street and Broadway in Manhattan. A year later, they sold the kiosk to buy a tiny wholesale jewelry business nearby, just south of Manhattan's nascent Koreatown. From Mondays to Saturdays, they sold nickel-silver earrings by the dozens to street peddlers. After being on her feet all day, at home Mom pulled her second shift—cooking, cleaning and watching over us. With the discipline of a trained musician, she managed the daily practice of our new lives. In those years, Mom's glossy chestnut hair began to gray.

Our first American Seollal reflected our immigrant pragmatism. In Korea, Seollal remains largely celebrated according to the lunar calendar. But while the Japanese were occupying the country between 1910 and 1945, Koreans were encouraged to follow the practice of observing Jan. 1 as New Year's Day, when it's called *Shinjeong*. Some Koreans still do. Consequently the country now observes two different national holidays as New Year's—one on Jan. 1 and the other according to the moon. When we moved to the U.S., Jan. 1 became our Seollal.

In our first decade in America, we didn't have extras like birthday parties or vacations. However, our parents' thrift allowed us to go from that two-room apartment to renting one with two bedrooms. Five years later, they made a down payment on a house large enough for three families in the nearby community of Maspeth. We lived on the second floor and rented out the top and bottom floors. We always had good school clothes, sneakers and warm coats, so when there was no money for new hanboks, my sisters and I didn't mention it. In America, we lost visits to Uncle's house, the lunar calendar date and the lovely silk dresses. Nevertheless, the bowing and the breakfast remained. Mom still expressed her culinary flair in our humble kitchen. She could take a discounted bag of soup bones and make a *tteokguk* broth that tasted like a miracle.

In the old days, before Korea's rapid industrialization fueled national prosperity in the 1960s, average folks dined on rice-cake soup only once a year. The dish is now readily available at Korean restaurants at a reasonable price. Historically, though, white rice was for the wealthy, and the soup required a great quantity of white rice to make the tubes of pounded rice cake symbolizing longevity and prosperity.

Mom grew up in a well-off household in Busan, a city on Korea's southeastern coast. As a young girl, the day before New Year's, she would take a heaping basket of white rice to the *tteok*-maker whose machine pounded and extruded the soft white cakes in the shape of a garden hose, called *garetteok*. She'd take the long tubes of still-warm cakes home, letting them dry a bit before the women in the house would slice the doughy cakes into thin ovals to drop into the soup. Traditionally, pheasant broth served as the base, but over the years people began to use less-expensive chicken. Nowadays, most households employ a quick broth made from brisket or flank steak or water flavored with dried anchovies or bonito powder.

Not my mom.

Sa-gol-pyuh (beef shin bone) costs little, and Mom spent hours, and I mean 10 or 12, simmering these knobs in intervals, depending on how long she could stay awake, because she had to continually add more water while skim-

ming away the fat and froth till the soup was paper-white and rich enough to coat a spoon.

In America, Mom bought her sliced ovals of *garetteok*, but she made her own mandu—pastry moons filled to bursting with ground beef, pork, tofu, chives, shredded zucchini, ginger and a smidge of garlic, salt and pepper. However, as a Busan native, she'll tell you that putting dumplings into the New Year's rice-cake soup was a concession she made in her marriage to a man from the opposite end of the country. As she'd pleat another dumpling, she'd say, "People from the North put mandu in everything. Well, your daddy likes it."

In Seoul, we'd eaten our meals off the low, carved jujube table, seated on Uncle and Aunt's pristine floors. In Queens, we sat on plywood chairs with loose spindles, our bounty spread over a chipped-veneer dining table. By 1985, I'd eaten nine bowls of New Year's soup in Queens when my parents bought a house in New Jersey. This time there were no tenants; we had a house to ourselves.

On their hard-won piece of American soil, Mom and Dad plowed up a patch of golf-course-worthy lawn and planted perilla (an herb belonging to the mint family), zucchini and tomatoes. Dad bought a Weber grill. Although they still worked in that dismal jewelry shop on 30th Street with huge rats in the basement bathroom, something happened when they finally crossed the George Washington Bridge from New York City into New Jersey: They began to enjoy life. The three of us finished college, and eventually were betrothed.

I brought home a young man who was half Japanese and half white American. We married in 1993, and Christopher learned how to bow on Seollal like a champ.

Three years later, there was a phone call from Seoul. During dinner, Uncle had slumped over the table. He'd died of a stroke. I had never forgotten his expectant smile on our final Seollal together, the silvery sheen of his traditional jacket, his kind-hearted boost for an awkward niece. This was the first time I saw my father cry.

In 1998, our son Sam was born. On his first Seollal, I dressed him in a scratchy hanbok when he was too young to protest the rainbow colored sleeves and pink puffy pants. Soon, Sam had three cousins. Then another call came from Seoul. Aunt had passed away.

With the onset of four grandchildren, another bit of tradition fell away. The three daughters lived in New York City and Seollal happened in New Jersey, so the breakfast became that most American of meals: brunch. Expected at 10:30 a.m. but appearing about 11, I'd ring the doorbell and stand behind Sam, my human shield against the why-are-you-late-on-Seollal-inquiry.

At my last Seollal in the U.S. in 2007, I knew I would be moving to Tokyo a few months later, so I paid closer attention to what my mother was preparing. Her head bent studiously, she was cutting up the toasted laver into slender uniform strips for the soup. Her hair, I noticed, was a glorious white crown.

At the table, Dad said grace, and the brothers-in-law, my sisters and I—all of us in our 30s and 40s—joked that if we passed up the rice-cake soup, we could avoid getting old—defying the law of time through ancient Korean logic. But how do you resist Mom's rice-cake soup? The Atkins diet and aging be damned; we picked up our spoons.

My first New Year in Tokyo, I decided to brave preparing my own New Year's feast, including the centerpiece, tteok mandu guk. Over the phone, Mom recited her recipes. "So easy," she said, then adding, "There's a lot of chopping."

Her japchae requires each finely slivered vegetable—red and yellow bell peppers, carrots, scallions—to be sautéed separately with olive oil, salt and black pepper. *Dangmyun* (the sweet-potato noodle)—the principal ingredient of japchae—is boiled until tender, rinsed, cut down to size, then separately sautéed in olive oil, salt and pepper. A tender omelette is cut into julienne strips. Skirt steak cut like matchsticks is marinated in soy sauce, sesame oil, brown sugar and a hint of chopped garlic. This is then sautéed separately, and removed from the pan. The slivered shiitake mushrooms are cooked in the remaining pan beef juices. What about the spinach? I asked, noting the oft-listed ingredient in several Korean cookbooks I'd been skimming. I felt her grimace over the international phone connection.

"Not beautiful," she counseled.

After all is done, the sautéed vegetables, beef, mushroom, omelette strips and noodles are tossed lightly like a salad with a splash of fine sesame oil for fragrance. Apart from the meat seasoning, soy sauce never enters the picture, because it would muddy the flavor and color. As for the short-cut version of stir-frying all the ingredients en masse?

"No."

This will take hours, I thought.

As a competent home cook with a streak of bravado, I've cooked dinners for 30, but the notion of making Mom's Seollal menu made me wobbly and sad. Wasn't this too soon to try to do this without her?

Still I managed to pull it off. But when Mom and Dad decided to visit the next October, I was determined to get her to make the dishes so I could take notes. We went to a Korean market to buy the ingredients. Once back at the apartment, Mom and I began prepping for the Seollal meal. In no time, the fragrance of brown sugar and ginger of her galbi jjim, the stewed short ribs, filled my kitchen. A few turns of the wrist and her dumpling filling was ready. She placed a teaspoon of it onto the floury translucent pastry on her left hand and sealed it expertly using a finger dab of egg white. Rows of dumplings soon lined the tray like ivory beads on an abacus.

In places and moments, my Seollal had been lost, but still, we had this.

Min Jin Lee is a writer based in Tokyo.

Clockwise from top: Galbi jjim—stewed short ribs—in a bowl; lifting galbi jjim from the pot; adding black pepper to the galbi jjim sauce

Alfie Goodrich for The Wall Street Journal

THE RECIPES

TTEOK MANDU GUK—Rice-Cake Soup with Dumplings

From Mi Hwa Lee as interpreted by her daughter Min Jin Lee

I. Guk: Mom's Beef Broth

This broth can be made in advance and frozen for up to a month.
Preparation time: 15 to 30 minutes
Cooking time: 10 to 12 hours
Serves: six to eight people

Ingredients
- 1.5 kilograms beef shin bones (sa-gohl-pyuh—available in Korean markets)
- 500 grams beef shank meat
- 500 grams skirt or flank steak

1. Wash shin bones in cold water. Place bones, shank meat and steak in a large stockpot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil on high heat and let boil for five minutes.

2. Remove and rinse the bones, shank meat and steak. Dump the water, clean the pot and add back the bones, shank meat and steak. Pour in 3.5 liters of cold water, making a note of the water level. This is the level you will want to keep restoring as you add water during the second simmer (step 5).

3. Over high heat, bring the pot to a boil, then lower to a simmer, cover the pot, and cook for two hours.

4. Remove the shank meat and steak.

5. Continue simmering the broth and bones in the covered pot for eight to 10 hours more, skimming the surface occasionally. Add water continually to restore the original level.

6. As the broth simmers, let the skirt steak cool and then shred it. Dress it with seasoning (in a bowl, mix 3 tablespoons soy sauce, 2 tablespoons sesame oil, 1 tablespoon sugar or 2 tablespoons honey, 1 tablespoon chopped garlic and 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds; adjust proportions to taste) and refrigerate. This will be served as a garnish for the final dish.

7. When the broth looks milky white, remove the bones and any marrow.

8. Let the broth cool, then strain it through a fine sieve. This should yield 3 to 4 liters. It can be refrigerated overnight and reheated for the tteok mandu guk. You will use about 350 milliliters of broth for each bowl.

A bowl of tteok mandu guk, ready to eat

II. Mandu (Dumplings)

You will likely use two to four dumplings a person for the tteok mandu guk. Extras can be frozen, and cooked later straight from the freezer, either pan-fried in olive oil on low heat (cover the pan), steamed or boiled in broth.

Ingredients
- 50 to 75 wonton skins or gyoza skins (the number needed depends on the size—85mm, 95mm or 110mm in diameter)

Filling
- 310 to 340 grams hard tofu (225 grams after water is squeezed out)
- 1 zucchini, grated (114 grams after water is squeezed out)
- 225 grams ground beef (or ground chicken)
- 225 grams ground pork
- 1/2 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 30 grams chopped Chinese chives or scallions
- 2 tablespoons chopped ginger
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 egg whites (to seal the dumplings)

1. Place tofu inside a square of cheesecloth and squeeze out as much water as possible.

2. Place grated zucchini inside the cheesecloth and squeeze out as much water as possible.

Mandu ready to cook

3. Combine the tofu, zucchini, ground pork, onion, chives, ginger, garlic, egg yolk, sesame oil, salt and pepper in a large mixing bowl.

4. Place egg whites in a small shallow bowl.

5. Take a wonton skin and dab egg white around the edge.

6. Place about a teaspoon of filling into the center of the skin, fold over and pleat the edges. Take care not to overstuff, or the dumpling will burst when cooking.

7. Place the completed dumpling, spaced one centimeter apart, on a cookie sheet or plate that has been covered with aluminum foil and dusted with flour. Cook immediately (instructions in Part III), cover and refrigerate, or freeze in an airtight container.

III. Tteok Mandu Guk (The Final Combination)

Ingredients
- 1.5 kilograms rice-cake ovals (tteok, available in Korean markets)
- Rolled egg omelet, sliced into half-centimeter-wide ribbons (optional)
- 240 milliliters shredded Korean-style toasted laver (seaweed) (optional)
- Seasoned shredded skirt steak

1. Soak the rice-cake ovals in cold water for 20 to 30 minutes to separate and slightly soften. (If they are fresh, they do not need to be soaked.) After soaking, the ovals will still be hard until cooked.

2. Heat the guk—beef broth—to boiling.

3. Drain the rice-cake ovals and add to the broth.

4. If the mandu (dumplings) are frozen, add right after the rice-cake ovals (two to four dumplings a person). If they're not frozen, wait two to three minutes.

Different kinds of tteok for sale at a Korean grocery in Tokyo

5. When the mandu float to the top, they're done. It takes five to seven minutes (six to eight minutes if frozen). The ovals take seven to nine minutes; they should be soft and chewy.

6. Serve in individual bowls. Garnish each serving with a few tablespoons of the steak, omelet ribbons and laver.

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▶ To see mandu in the making, click on **Asia.WSJ.com**.

A Sip Will Do

An expert's tip on finding a nice bottle: Drink it

By Katy McLaughlin

This March, at least 80 judges will take their seats at a wine competition in Lodi, California, where they will taste glass after glass of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Their qualification: They like wine.

The amateur judges at the first annual Consumer Wine Awards at Lodi won't be trained or told what to look for in the wines they taste. They will judge only wines of a style they know they like, so Cabernet Sauvignon or White Zinfandel fans will stick to those wines. They won't be allowed to take notes—instead, they'll take a sip and rate how much they like it. In short, they will try to enjoy the wines the way an ordinary consumer would.

The idea behind this competition, and a handful of other new approaches to evaluating wine, is to address some flaws in traditional wine judging. Critics of wine competitions and point systems argue that experts frequently disagree among themselves, and wines that win in one competition often lose in others. Experts have been known to assign the exact same wines both high and low scores after tasting them on separate occasions, one study found. Another wrinkle: A study showed that consumers tend not to prefer the wines that experts like best, raising the question of whether experts' opinions are pertinent at all.

When sampling wine, says Tim Hanni, a co-founder of the Lodi event, experts "do things no normal human being would ever do" in a social setting, including slurping, gurgling and "creating metaphors about place, fruit and vegetables" while writing tasting notes. Judges traditionally confer with one another about which wines should win top awards, opening the door for personality and ego to influence decisions, Mr. Hanni says. The Lodi judges won't be allowed to compare notes before giving their ratings.

Lea Pierce, founder of Wine Competition Management, is rolling out another set of wine competitions that tweak the traditional format. This June, the company will host the first Next Gen Wine Competition for Millennial Wine Drinkers, where all the wine judges will be industry experts, including chefs and sommeliers, between 21 and 35 years old. The goal is to find wines that will appeal to that age group. The National Women's Wine Competition, now in its fourth year, does the same thing for women: Only female wine experts serve as judges. Both competitions will be held in Santa Rosa, California.

Ms. Pierce, whose Santa Rosa-based company runs wine competitions, had no idea what kinds of wines female judges would prefer when the competition began, or whether women would display wine preferences distinct from the general population of judges. But after a few years, a pattern emerged: The women experts tended to choose well-balanced wines, often blends of two or more grapes, and "women like less alcohol, that doesn't burn, under 13.5%," Ms. Pierce says. Contrary to popular assumptions, they did not prefer white wines to red nor opt for sweeter wines, Ms. Pierce says. Last year, the panel gave top honors to Nicholson Ranch 2007 Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Estate, which goes for about $38 in the U.S.

The overall goal of Ms. Pierce's competitions is to give consumers assurance that the wines were selected by wine experts who have something in common with them, she says. Every year, she also insists that a couple of experts who have never served as judges at a competition before be included.

Though this is the first year the Lodi team is using consumer judges, for the past two years the team of organizers has held competitions in which wine experts were questioned to determine the sensitivity level of their palates. Awards were then handed out to wines that most pleased Tolerant, Sensitive and Hyper-Sensitive judges, categories that indicate how much tasters enjoy strong tastes versus subtle ones. Tolerant and Sensitive tasters, who like stronger-tasting wines, awarded a gold medal to Barefoot Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon, which retails in the U.S. for roughly $7 a bottle. Hyper-Sensitive tasters, who tend to like sweeter, gentler tastes, gave it only a bronze. Loredona 2007 Viognier, which retails for around $10, was judged gold by all three sensitivity groups

A team of professors and students at the University of California, Davis, are running experiments to determine the exact methodology that will be used this year at Lodi. Topics of investigation: How long should judges wait between tastes of different wines, and what is the best way to cleanse the palate?

It's a question that led two students at the viticulture degree program of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, to create a palate-cleansing beverage in the school lab. The water-based formula includes small amounts of citric acid, sugar, pectin and cellulose gum, lightly carbonated to "scrub the mouth," says Andrew Macaluso, one of the product's creators. Marketed by Mr. Macaluso and his business partner, Nicole Chamberlain, as SanTásti, it made some inroads into wine stores and tasting rooms in its first year, he says.

For people simply tasting wines at home, the experts have a few tips. Though it may not be the time most people are in the mood for a drink, Liz Thach, a professor of wine business at Sonoma State University, says wine is best tested after breakfast and before lunch, when the palate is still fresh.

Rebecca Murphy, a Seattle-based wine-competition consultant and producer, suggests tasting wines from a narrow category, such as Cabernet Sauvignon from a particular region and a particular year. That lets tasters compare "apples to apples and oranges to oranges," to see what they like.

Forget writing notes about whether wines carry notes of cherries or tobacco, Mr. Hanni says—these observations just distract from the goal, which is to identify wines you like the best. Anna Caroselli, a student scientist on the Lodi team, suggests assigning a number on a nine-point scale, from 1 for "dislike extremely" to 9 for "like extremely."

Swirling and gurgling wine in the mouth is helpful for professionals trying to write a descriptive analysis of a wine. But for regular consumers just trying to identify wines they may want to buy again, a normal sip will do, Ms. Caroselli says.

Erica Beckman for The Wall Street Journal

Nicholson Ranch's 2007 Pinot Noir Sonoma Valley Estate, below, won top honors at last year's National Women's Wine Competition, where only women serve as judges.

Arbitrage

A bottle of Glenfiddich 30-year-old Scotch whisky

City	Currency	US$
Tokyo	¥23,183	$260
Brussels	€205	$289
Paris	€209	$294
Manila	14,500 pesos	$311
New York		$317
Frankfurt	€232	$327
London	£219	$353
Rome	€279	$393
Shanghai	3,038 yuan	$445
Hong Kong	HK$3,919	$504
Singapore	S$773	$551

Prices, including taxes, as provided by local retailers in each city, converted to the nearest U.S. dollar

Corbis

THE DISH: Pad thai

Bangkok's ubiquitous, customizable fry-up

By John Krich

The name translates simply as "Thai fry," but no common concoction so perfectly epitomizes the complexity of Thailand's culinary palette.

And where else in the world but Bangkok would one humble plate, available from after-breakfast to after-hours at street stalls, wet markets, four-table mom-and-pops as well as trendy cafes and international hotels, provide the flavors of rice noodles, shrimp, egg, palm sugar, tamarind, lime, tofu, chilies, green onion, chives, bean sprouts, banana flowers, lotus leaf, cilantro and peanut, with vinegar, fish sauce, sometimes ketchup and often more sugar added? And all for about one dollar?

Ubiquitous yet infinitely varied and always filling on the fly, pad thai is to Bangkok what a street-cart hot dog is to New York. Who would choose the latter over the former?

THE HISTORY

Some conjecture that Vietnamese traders brought their light treatment of noodles to Ayutthaya, the nation's capital from 1350 to 1767. But it's certain that Bangkok, the port where the capital was relocated after Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese, was home to a flourishing community of Chinese traders—and where there are Chinese, there are noodles.

However, the Thai-style noodles did not become properly celebrated or win its current, proud moniker until Field Marshal Pibul Songgram ruled the nation from 1938-44 and 1948-57. A modernizer who changed the country's name to Thailand from Siam and banned the chewing of betel nut, Pibul also promoted the name "pad thai" as a statement of nationalism. Promoting rice noodles and noodle shops was part of a drive to diversify a struggling economy. Little did this tyrant know what a gift he was giving to the future legions of Thai-food fans in America, Europe and Australia.

However, according to long-time Bangkok food writer and expert guide Bob Halliday, local chefs had already embarked on the project of turning their bowl of pasta into something distinctly Southeast Asian—mainly through the liberal use of tamarind, which, according to Mr. Hallliday, can still be seen in a few stubbornly old-fashioned operations that continue to cook the dish in a base of sour tamarind juice.

THE SETTING

A pad thai simply isn't a pad thai unless accompanied, often on a separate plate, by a raw quarter of a banana flower, uncooked bean sprouts and lotus leaf, ground peanuts and fresh lime to squeeze over it all. A tray of the usual Thai condiments (chilies in vinegar, sugar, fish sauce, etc.) helps local eaters customize their noodles even further.

Somehow, the dish also seems to taste better when served on plastic plates and metallic tables in clear sight of flaming woks, under the stars or lazy ceiling fans. And, unlike much Asian food, pad thai is rarely matched with beer. The Thais prefer to wash it all down with tangerine or coconut juice or cold barley tea. One local told me, "Pad thai goes great with Pepsi."

THE JUDGMENT

"Not too wet, not too dry" fairly summarizes the criteria for judging pad thai, according to most Thais as well as Mr. Halliday. Excess gloppy sauce is decidedly out. The dish can be fancied up on request with sanchen noodles—more complex and al dente—covered with a thin lid of omelet, or supplemented with expensive add-ons like crabmeat. But the basics must not be ignored.

A balance must be properly maintained between the heat of the chilies, the saltiness of the dried shrimp, the sourness of the tamarind and the sweetness of the palm sugar. Given how difficult that all sounds, it's amazing how often it all turns out right. And it has to be turned out fast, served and eaten straight from the pan. Much like real pizza, pad thai just doesn't keep or reheat.

THE SOURCES

Nearly everywhere in Bangkok is a good a place to start looking for pad thai nirvana—and many purveyors stay open until 2 a.m., as the dish is a popular after-drinking replenisher. If you pay more than 40 baht ($1.20) for a basic pad thai, you are paying for the potted plants and the air-conditioning.

Thipsamai

The granddaddy of pad thai establishments, founded in 1966, it packs in a loyal mostly Thai crowd nightly. A good starting point, though its noodles are cooked too much in bulk, its basic rendition is heavy on chives and its higher-priced version is a bit too strong on reddish shrimp oil. Several other noodle slingers compete on this atmospheric block near the Old City's Golden Mount temple.

313 Mahachai Rd., Samranrat;
5:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.
☎ 66-2-221-6280
Web: www.thipsamai.com

Ratchawat Market

There are a number of pad thai stalls surrounding Talad Ratchawat, a traditional market on the edge of one of the city's oldest klongs (canals). But choose carefully. Freshness is all; in addition to the obvious signals (if it looks soggy, move on), one indicator is the size of the batch—the smaller, the better.

Ratchawat Market, between Nakhonchaisri Road and Soi Ruampradit, near Samsen Canal, Dusit

Studio 9

The home-style restaurant of the Patravadi arts complex, situated near the Wang Lang pier directly across the Chao Phraya river from the Grand Palace, is known for its paprika chicken—a specialty of the complex's actress founder—but also serves an especially pleasing version of pad thai. In addition, it offers one of the best river views in Bangkok, and experimental dance shows at dinner.

69/1 Soi Wat Rakang Arun Amarin Rd., Siriraj; Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; to midnight Friday and Saturday.
☎ 66-2-866-2144
Web: www.patravaditheatre.com

John Krich is a writer based in Bangkok.

Sotheby's INTERNATIONAL REALTY

sothebysrealty.com

EXUMAS, BAHAMAS

Private 681 acre island. Features 2,500' tarmacadam airstrip, 7 BR, 6 bath main house, caretaker's residence, workshop, gymnasium, and office. The island has 4 fresh water wells and 40KW diesel generator. Web 4000002263. **$55,000,000 US**. George Damianos.

Damianos Sotheby's International Realty
+1.242.362.4211 | SIRbahamas.com

TORTOLA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Sterling House, a rare beachfront 6 BR, 6.5 bath residence on the most photographed beach in the Caribbean. Exquisitely appointed, 15 steps from Tortola's Long Bay Beach offering a spectacular panorama of sand, sea, sunsets and starlit nights. **$6,500,000 US**. Maritha Keil

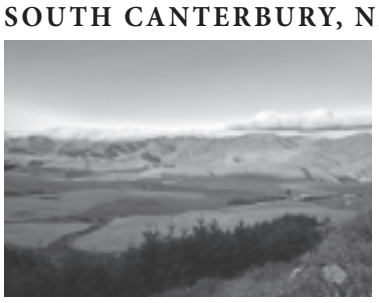
British Virgin Islands Sotheby's International Realty
1.284.340.5555 | bvisothebysrealty.com

KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LONDON

A bright and spacious duplex apartment which benefits from state of the art technology combined with comfortable and luxurious accommodation in a highly sought-after location. Property ID: 121621. **£6,950,000**. Sophie Panizzo.

Sotheby's International Realty London Brokerage
+44.20.7495.9584 | sothebyshomes.com

SOUTH CANTERBURY, NEW ZEALAND



Kaiwarua Station sits in a remote high country valley & is approx 5,800 ha/14,332 acres (subject to survey) of freehold high country land running approx 13,000 stock units. Price by negotiation. Russell Reddell.

Browns Sotheby's International Realty
+64.21.355.291 | brownssothebysrealty.com

HEALDSBURG, CA

The Grape Leaf Inn is located in the Northern Sonoma County Wine Country. Featuring lush grounds and impeccable interiors, this 13 room luxury Inn was named The Best B&B in the Wine Country by NBC 2 years in a row. **$4,400,000**. Eric Drew.

Healdsburg Sotheby's International Realty
707.433.6555 | artisansir.com

SNOWMASS VILLAGE, CO

Meticulously designed home featuring exquisite materials. 1+ acre, 6,291 sf, 5 BR, 5.5 baths, reclaimed chestnut and leather floors, and green construction. Direct ski access to Snowmass Mountain, awe-inspiring views. **$8,900,000**, furnished. Mark Haldeman.

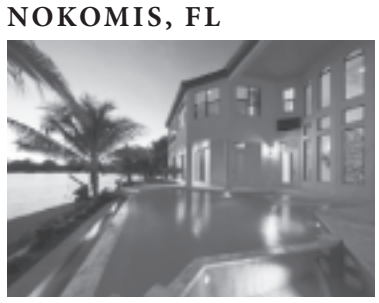
Morris & Fyrwald Sotheby's International Realty
970.925.6060 | AspenSkiHomes.com

KEY LARGO, FL

Waterfront elegance in prestigious Ocean Reef community. New construction with 5,200+ sf, 3 BR, 3 full & 2 half baths, den, & study. Ideal location w/sweeping canal views, 133+ water frontage & seconds from renown FL Keys fishing. **$5,980,000**. Russell Post.

Russell Post Sotheby's International Realty
305.367.2027 | russellpostsir.com

NOKOMIS, FL



A mariner's paradise located just minutes from the Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf of Mexico. Mediterranean inspired architecture surrounded by tropical landscaping results in an exclusive retreat with exceptional views. **$3,600,000**. Terry Herschberger.

Signature Sotheby's International Realty
941.468.8439 | signaturesir.com

PALM BEACH, FL

Oceanfront Maurice Fatio estate. 288' of ocean views from this 5 BR, 6 full & 2 half bath residence. 2 BR, 2 bath pool house. Direct oceanfront cabana. WEB: 0074241. **$31,500,000**. Cristina Condon & Karen Lehrman.

Sotheby's International Realty Palm Beach Brokerage
561.659.3555 | sothebyshomes.com/palmbeach

SAILFISH POINT, FL

Newly constructed direct oceanfront estate w/170' of private beachfront in the gated community of Sailfish Point, featuring Jack Nicklaus "Signature" golf and a private deep water marina. Furnished in Ralph Lauren Home features "smart house" technology. **$13,500,000**.

Sailfish Point Sotheby's International Realty
800.799.7772 | sailfishpoint.com

SAILFISH POINT, FL

Stunning St. Lucie Inlet views are enjoyed from this waterfront estate. Traditional design is reminiscent of a British Colonial Caribbean island home. Second floor balconies, covered terraces, sundeck, and pool/spa offer the perfect setting. **$4,950,000**.

Sailfish Point Sotheby's International Realty
800.799.7772 | sailfishpoint.com

VENICE ISLAND, FL

Escape to paradise at Venetian Shores, a luxurious boutique community featuring 8 townhouse units, located just one block from the beaches of Venice. Views of the Gulf of Mexico from every room with balconies. Price upon request. Stephen Lingley.

Signature Sotheby's International Realty
941.809.7580 | signaturesir.com

ATLANTA, GA

New custom designed estate in the heart of Buckhead. 2-story open living rm w/ library that overlooks the pool. Au Pair suite w/separate entrance. Geo thermal HVAC. Outdoor covered Viking kit near pool. 7 BR, 9 full & 4 half baths. **$12,000,000**. Debra Johnston.

Atlanta Fine Homes Sotheby's International Realty
404.924.6806 | AtlantaFineHomes.com

HONOLULU, HI

Executive 4 BR, 3.5 bath home on golf course embraces island style living. Two-story villa with 10' ceilings, air conditioning, chef's kitchen, and poolside lanai with glorious views. Surfing at Sandy Beach is nearby. **$1,333,000 (FS)**. Jacqueline Collins Buck (RA).

Mary Worrall Associates Sotheby's International Realty
808.224.4285 | worrall.com

WESTPORT POINT, MA

Private 50 acre waterfront retreat with 1,475' of frontage on the Westport River. ¼ mile from the Atlantic Ocean. Registered dock, 6 BR, 4.5 baths, renovated barn-style residence. Separate waterfront building lot. **$3,950,000**. Bette Hamilton.

Olde Dartmouth Sotheby's International Realty
508.996.6562 | oldedartmouthSIR.com

CAPE ELIZABETH, ME

"Sealights". Classic John Calvin Stevens shingle style cottage w/265' of ocean frontage. 5 BR, 4 baths, gourmet kit, decks, & heated pool. 1.6 acre estate. Breathtaking vistas. **$3,725,000**. Preston Robison & Diane Shevenell.

Legacy Properties Sotheby's International Realty
207.770.2236 / 207.770.2224 | LegacySIR.com

WHITEFISH, MT

Prices on the remaining 10 homesites dramatically reduced in the Northern Lights West ski-in/ski-out community at Whitefish Mountain Resort. First to purchase receives a ski pass for the next 5 ski seasons! Price upon request. Stephanie Skinner.

Glacier Sotheby's International Realty
406.261.8430 | glaciersothebysrealty.com

NEWBURY, NH

From your Mountain top enjoy spectacular views of Lake Sunapee & surrounding mtns. Recently built 10 room home, gourmet kitchen, 4 BR, 3.5 baths, and wine cellar on 11 acres with 2 car attached garage. Close to skiing and boating. **$1,200,000**. Bo Quackenbos.

New London Agency Sotheby's International Realty
603.763.7300 | newlondonagency.com

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CROTON-ON-HUDSON, NY

New construction in an executive subdivision. Privately set on 2.78 beautiful acres with upscale amenities, a gourmet kitchen and a master bedroom suite with gas fireplace. MLS# 2933444. **$1,395,000**. Phyllis Weydig.

Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty
914.238.2090 | jbfsir.com

MAMARONECK, NY

Prestigious Orienta Point waterfront on 1+ acre with private pool, beach, pier and dock. This 5,700± sf contemporary has 5 BR and 6 baths. 30 minutes to NYC. MLS: 2912988. **$4,900,000**. Cary Sleeper & Christy Murphy.

Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty
914.834.0270 | jbfsir.com

NEW YORK, NY

House in the sky. Elegant, classic 5 BR triplex penthouse, E. 70's/Park Ave. One-of-a-kind pre-war co-op with 4 fireplaces and lovely architectural details. WEB: 0015765. **$22,000,000**. Bunny Goodwin.

Sotheby's International Realty East Side Manhattan Brokerage
212.606.7721 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc

NEW YORK, NY

162 East 63rd Street. Exceptional 5-story home with south facing private planted garden. 5 BR, 5.5 baths, 5 fireplaces, terraces. Impeccably renovated. WEB: 0016674. **$8,250,000**. Olga Neulist.

Sotheby's International Realty East Side Manhattan Brokerage
212.606.7707 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc

NEW YORK, NY

1 West 67th Street. The Hotel Des Artistes. Opulent 12-room duplex with dramatic 18'+ ceiling great room, 2,500 volume library, wine cave. WEB: 0016682. **$7,900,000**. Nikki Field & Pat Wheatley.

Sotheby's International Realty East Side Manhattan Brokerage
212.606.7669 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc

NEW YORK, NY

Sprawling space and high ceilings define this loft at a premier full-service condo in Chelsea. Bright, open kitchen with top-of-the-line appliances. Views from the roof deck. WEB: WJ0135029. **$1,275,000**. Tom Cooper.

Sotheby's International Realty Downtown Manhattan Brokerage
212.431.2474 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc

NEW YORK, NY

Greenwich Village. Spacious 1 BR w/large dining area in this full-service condop, Georgetown Plaza. Hdwd flrs, ample storage space, and 9' ceilings. Roof deck and pool. WEB: WJ0134993. Price upon request. Yvonne DeNigris.

Sotheby's International Realty Downtown Manhattan Brokerage
212.431.2429 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc

PURCHASE, NY

An NBA regulation basketball court is just one of the special features within this country estate situated on 5 acres overlooking the 3rd and 7th holes on the Country Club of Purchase. **$8,995,000**. WEB: 2711790. Pat Hirsch.

Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty
914.967.4600 | jbfsir.com

SAGAPONACK, NY

Views of reserves & ocean. 5 BR home with pool on 1.5± acres & adjoining renovated 19th century barn residence w/3 BR plus 3 add'l summer BR & pool on 1.4± acres. WEB: CP0035373. **$14,250,000**. Beate Moore.

Sotheby's International Realty Bridgehampton Brokerage
631.537.6000 x7328 | sothebyshomes.com

SAG HARBOR, NY

3 story residence, 2 BR on the second floor, and transformed third-floor entertainment room. Backyard garden, 3rd floor terrace with views over Sag Harbor's roof tops. WEB: 0054647. **$3,495,000**. Deborah Srb.

Sotheby's International Realty Southampton Brokerage
631.283.0600 x26 | sothebyshomes.com

SCARSDALE, NY

Prestigious estate area in Scarsdale with gated entry to 4+ exquisite park-like acres with pool, pool house, tennis. Luxurious 12,000 sf with 20 rooms, 8 BR, 4 fireplaces, exercise, & spa. **$14,250,000**. Caroline Freidfertig.

Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty
914.725.3305 | jbfsir.com

SOUTHAMPTON, NY

Water Mill South. Waterfront pool. 1st floor master suite & elevator. 3 en-suite guest BR. Sunken, all-weather tennis ct & cabana. 3-car gar, dock, & 1 mile to ocean beaches. WEB: 0054665. **$9,950,000**. Harald Grant.

Sotheby's International Realty Southampton Brokerage
631.283.0600 x13 | sothebyshomes.com

SOUTHAMPTON, NY

7,000 sf, 6 ensuite BR, covered porch, heated pool, pool house, spa and tennis court. 3-car garage, full gym, sauna, and wine cellar. WEB: 0053941. **$8,900,000**. Pat Petrillo.

Sotheby's International Realty Southampton Brokerage
631.283.0600 x16 | sothebyshomes.com

TUXEDO PARK, NY

This beautiful 6500 sf country estate is located on 6.35 private mountainside acres directly overlooking pristine Tuxedo Lake. Features acres of century old stone walls & ruins, pathways, & specimen trees. Seven fireplaces, intricate architecural details, breathtaking views. **$4,950,000**. Cindy Booth.

Towne & Country Properties Sotheby's International Realty
845.351.4503 | towneandcountryinc.com

AUSTIN, TX

Nestled in the Texas Hill Country close to "The Live Music Capital of the World." 6 BR, 6 bath, 8,538 sf residence includes private guest suite. 1.86 acre lot features indoor/outdoor entertaining areas & 5 car garage. Exemplary schools. **$3,200,000**. Janet Burgess.

Capital City Sotheby's International Realty
512.328.0058 | 9001MarlyCove.com

ARLINGTON, VA

Views of the Potomac from this gorgeous end unit 5,700 sf town home, built in 2005. 5 levels with high ceils, hdwd/ limestone floors & gourmet kitchen. Huge rooftop terrace, great for entertaining. MLS: AR7129128. **$2,600,000**. Deborah Shapiro.

TTR Sotheby's International Realty
703.407.1600 | ttrsir.com

MCLEAN, VA

Stately colonial in prestigious Langley Forest only mins to Washington DC. Gated entry, 5 BR, 5 baths, + nanny/in-law suite, 3 car garage, gracious outdoor entertaining space. **$2,275,000**. Stephanie White. stephanie.white@ sothebysrealty.com

TTR Sotheby's International Realty
703.489.5045 | ttrsir.com

DORSET, VT

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, c.1820 country estate built from marble quarried on-site with gardens, stonework, tea house, formal pool with fountain, & outbuildings. 14 acres, 8 BR & 6.5 baths. **$2,250,000**.

Vermont Country Properties Sotheby's International Realty
802.362.5040 | vermontcountryproperties.com

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Screen gems

'Nine' shines; 'Crazy Heart' is flawless

Fox Searchlight Pictures ('Crazy Heart'); The Weinstein Company ('Nine')

Top, Daniel Day-Lewis, at right talking with Kate Hudson, seated, is director Guido Contini in the screen adaptation of the musical 'Nine'; Jeff Bridges stars as a washed-up country singer with Maggie Gyllenhaal in 'Crazy Heart.'

By Joe Morgenstern

Life is not a cabaret in "Nine," Rob Marshall's extravagant screen adaptation of the Broadway musical, despite many Bob Fosse tonalities and tropes. It's a carnival, in keeping with the source of its inspiration, the Federico Fellini film "8 1/2." And as befits that overblown, self-indulgent, pseudopsychoanalytic and still fascinating source, the carnival is loud, brash, brassy, sexy and sometimes tacky or silly, but always entertaining.

Daniel Day-Lewis, as the Fellini surrogate Guido Contini, does charmingly eccentric variations on the theme of Marcello Mastroianni doing his own version of Guido/Federico, the blocked maestro who spends the whole film trying to figure out what his next film will be. (At times this slouching, brooding director looks like a chain-smoking Ichabod Crane.) "Nine" isn't the equal of Mr. Marshall's "Chicago," but it's a fine showcase for the women in its cast, an extraordinary assemblage of stars who deliver a variety of high-quality goods in musical numbers of variable quality.

The first shot of Penelope Cruz, who plays Carla, Guido's mistress, finds her sliding down a fuchsia fabric slide; from there it gets even better as Ms. Cruz gives herself bravely, and lustily, to a hoochie-koochie dance routine that even has her swinging on a trapeze. Judi Dench, as Lilli, Guido's costume designer and confidante, comes on stage with a Marlene Dietrich demeanor and a red feather boa. Her number is drop-dead stunning, as well as an ad hoc seminar in sheer showmanship. Nicole Kidman, as Claudia, Guido's muse, gets to sing the only first-rate song, "Unusual Way," and she does it gentle justice.

The film's most remarkable performance is given by Marion Cotillard as Luisa, Guido's long-suffering wife. Her musical number, "My Husband Makes Movies," has more range than any of the others, from coiled calm to unchained ferocity. And Ms. Cotillard's gift for mystery—the art of doing much while seeming to do almost nothing—serves her brilliantly in the movie's best scene, which couples humiliation with insight. I haven't mentioned until now the most remarkable presence in "Nine," that of Sophia Loren as Guido's late but ever-present mother. It's always a pleasure to see Ms. Loren, but seeing her in this context summons up half a lifetime of screen history. She, no less than Fellini, embodies the glory days of Italian cinema.

'Crazy Heart'

"Crazy Heart" is blessed with so many marvelous moments, lovely lines and vivid characters that it's hard to know where to begin, but let's start with an encounter in a tacky Santa Fe motel room. Bad Blake, a ruined legend of a country musician played by Jeff Bridges, is being interviewed by Maggie Gyllenhaal's Jean, a single mother who writes about music for a local newspaper. When she asks what he wants to talk about, he looks into her radiant face and replies, in a booze-fraught baritone, "I want to talk about how bad you make this room look."

Well, I want to talk about how bad this debut feature makes most of the past movie year look. It was written and directed by Scott Cooper (he adapted the script from a novel by Thomas Cobb) with an unerring instinct for intimacy and a flawless sense of proportion, whether in the big moments or the small ones. It's a conventional film—that newspaper interview is only one of several well-worn plot devices—but one that wears its conventions gracefully. It's a film that recalls such classics of the genre as "Tender Mercies" (though it's less subdued); "Payday" (though it's more sweet-spirited) and "Songwriter" (though it's more sincere), but one that takes a place of honor among them.

And it revels in the glory of Mr. Bridges. Everyone has a favorite Jeff Bridges movie. For many it's the Coen brothers' "The Big Lebowski," and who can argue with that? For me it's Steve Kloves's heartbreakingly beautiful "The Fabulous Baker Boys," in which he plays a self-loathing pianist on the downswing. Bad Blake may not loathe himself, but he certainly deplores what his life has come to, and he's running on empty as he drives his battered 1978 Chevy Suburban from one crummy gig to another. Yet there's a difference between Bad Blake and Jack Baker. Bad was once a star—"I used to be somebody," he sings, "now I am somebody else"—and Mr. Bridges fills his emptiness with quirky humor, dangerous anger, an urgent yearning for redemption and a gift for evoking a better time in a voice that's plenty good enough for this one. It's a performance on a scale with the West's wide-open spaces.

T Bone Burnett and the late Texas songwriter Stephen Bruton wrote Bad's songs; they provide the movie's rock-solid foundation. When the script says that Bad has written a particularly wonderful song, our ears confirm the judgment. (The one in question, "The Weary Kind," was the work of Mr. Burnett and Ryan Bingham.) And music isn't just the pretext for drama, it's part of the text. One deliciously instructive sequence pits Bad, in all his seedy shrewdness, against an equally shrewd veteran sound man whose allegiance is to the concert's younger star, Tommy Sweet, not to Bad, who's merely opening the show.

Tommy is played by Colin Farrell. The relationship between the two men is an interesting one—Bad taught Tommy everything he knows—and Mr. Farrell's performance is an interesting reflection of generational contrasts. Rather than play Tommy for charm, Mr. Farrell gives him an almost sullen coolness that makes Bad's raunchy bearishness all the more affecting. There's nothing cool, though, about Ms. Gyllenhaal's performance—it's the finest, fullest work of her career. Jean and Bad aren't a natural match, and not only because of the difference in age. Someone else might see him as a sinkhole surrounded by Day-Glo danger signs (if he weren't played by Jeff Bridges, that is), but Jean is so open and tender—and so touchingly needy—that all of her decisions make fateful sense.

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The City of the Future Echoes the Past

By Julie V. Iovine

New York

Beijing burnished its international reputation with a handful of acclaimed icons built for the Olympics. But Shanghai is still the Chinese city that appeals most to foreigners, thanks to its checkered past, colonial architecture and mercantile drive—qualities that don't need translating for most Westerners.

And yet, in recent years, the pace of change in Shanghai has accelerated at such a blistering rate—400 skyscrapers rising in the historic core alone since 1990—that holding on to a coherent impression of the contemporary city is almost impossible. The relentless escalation seems daunting, even a little scary. A visit to "China Prophecy: Shanghai," now at the Skyscraper Museum in New York through April, is a handy way to get a better grip on the changes under way in this clamoring, glamorous city.

Built around the plausible conceit that Shanghai today is experiencing the explosive urban creativity and convulsive growth last seen during the skyscraper age of New York in the '30s, the show sets out to "juxtapose a retrospective of American visions of the skyscraper city of the future from the early 20th century with an exploration of Chinese cities today, pursuing the parallel conditions of rapid modernization and urbanization."

If Shanghai today "reproduces and surpasses New York in the '30s," when it was home to seven million people and sprouting up with 200 skyscrapers (at that time more than in all other cities in the world combined), its cosmopolitan status can be attributed in part to the American architects at work there. The show focuses on a cluster of three skyscrapers, or "supertalls" between 88 and 128 stories, all designed by American firms: Jin Mao by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Shanghai World Financial Center by Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); and Shanghai Tower by Gensler. The oldest and shortest, 88-story Jin Mao, completed in 1999, assumes the shape of a stretched pagoda; while the tallest, Shanghai Tower, which is under construction and due for completion in 2014, is already leaping ahead technologically and aesthetically with a twisting glass and steel cape wrapped around nine stacked atriums at its core. Not incidentally, all three are Manhattan-like in their proximity to water as they rise in Pudong, a peninsula jutting into the Huangpu River that was designated by Deng Xiaoping in 1990 to be the pulsing heart, and financial center, of the metropolis.

> Comparing Shanghai today with New York circa 1930.

Staffan Holgerson

More celebratory than skeptical, "China Prophecy" notes the irrepressible energy, the posturing, and the power plays that it takes to translate ambition into a skyline. Plaza 66, a two-tower commercial project completed in 2006 on busy Nanjing Road, has the kind of sky bridges once envisioned for a future Manhattan according to an accompanying photograph of a 1931 Regional Plan of New York. Another high-rise complex of offices, hotels, retail and restaurants, Jing An Kerry Centre, also designed by KPF, was explicitly modeled after Rockefeller Center with towers arrayed around a 32,000-square-foot central plaza; at the show, a model of the center is set in front of a historic rendering of the real Rockefeller Center to underscore the similarities.

Looking back at the jazzy age of New York skyscraper-building, we might imagine the mood back then was pure excitement and swagger, forgetting that there was probably also the anxiety of displaced residents, official disregard for old building stock, and developers' bullying techniques. Watching Shanghai grow even from afar, we can capture that dual sense of optimism and fear that accompanies most ambitious development. When Deng publicly blessed the development plan transforming mudflats and warehouses into Pudong, he pronounced it the "Head of the Dragon," while some million village people were swept out of the way without much notice.

The show is small but knowing and loaded with riveting minutiae, including a video panning across an official 8,000-square-foot model of the city showing all existing and even future building projects in Shanghai. (Surely, one of the perks of owning all the land is that the state knows what's going to go where way ahead of everyone else.) Details about how materials found their way into the show—for example, a German photographer found on Flickr was commissioned to make a compelling you-are-there video, filmed while traveling through town on a Changjiang motorcycle—hint that the museum subscribes to the same ad hoc opportunistic spirit of the skyscraper-builders themselves.

Does "China Prophecy" offer more than an exercise in compare, contrast and celebrate? One final video is actually quite provocative. Spliced together side by side, the clip juxtaposes a film from the Democracity and Futurama displays at the 1939 World's Fair in New York with a promotional video for Shanghai 2010 Expo, with its theme "Better City, Better Life." Both extol elevated highways and skyscrapers rising from verdant green acres. To our contemporary eyes, Futurama may look rather quaint, but in Shanghai those same visions are already reaching for the sky and beyond.

Ms. Iovine is the executive editor of The Architect's Newspaper.

Bookshelf / *By James F. Penrose*

Making Sense of Sound

"Through foolishness they deceived themselves into thinking that there was no right or wrong way in music, that it was to be judged good or bad by the pleasure it gave." With these words Plato complained about the "promiscuous cleverness and a spirit of law-breaking" that characterized the music of his time—the fourth century B.C. Even then, it seems, music had a form and structure that guided it composition and performance, for "law-abiding" musicians anyway.

A Language of Its Own
By Ruth Katz
(University of Chicago Press, 354 pages, $48)

In "A Language of Its Own," Ruth Katz shows how Western art music, over the centuries, evolved a kind of "grammar" that listeners grasped without overt instruction. Rules that had governed earlier music helped to form still later rules, conferring "meaning" on what is, after all, an abstract and otherwise contentless art form. This grammar, Ms. Katz notes, gave an internal coherence to music and allowed it to adapt to cultural and social change. It also created a "shared understanding" between musicians and audiences, propelling Western music's extraordinary ability to convey a variety of moods and feelings.

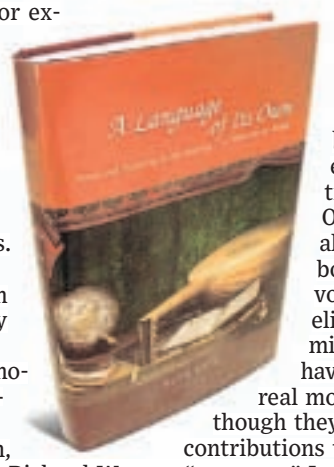
In the late 19th century, however, music began to lose its broadly shared, centuries-old coherence; and its self-perpetuating qualities began to fall away. More and more, Ms. Katz chronicles, composers felt compelled to write for themselves and their peers rather than for the public, breaking rules (sometimes smashing them) on behalf of individual expression and causing a rupture with the past. The results are still with us today. "I can't be responsible for the audience," one modern British composer put it a few years ago. "I'm not running a restaurant." Popular music and "world music" have usurped much of the territory formerly occupied by classical music. How could this have happened?

To explain, Ms. Katz goes back to the beginning. Western music, she reminds us, evolved ever more rapidly once a system of written notation was developed around the 10th century, leading to ever more sophisticated harmonic possibilities. Monophonic (one-voiced) music is relatively easy to perform (think of whistling), but polyphonic music requires "controls" to prevent voices from interfering with one another. The notational system facilitated such controls and, at the same time, provided a visual record of the composer's intent, a record that could be studied and written about. As Ms. Katz reminds us, musicians writing *about* music played a key role in Western music's evolution.

Over time, compositions increased in complexity: not only in their harmony but in their rhythm and structural forms. Musical rules, likewise, served an ever more complex "integrating" function. The beauty of the system was that, while it constrained composers, it produced works with sharply individual personalities. Starting in the late Middle Ages, beautiful and increasingly varied works emerged as a coherent musical language refined itself and adapted to changing fashions.

By the mid-18th century, "diatonic" harmony—the basis of the classical style and the basis of what we think of as tonality—was firmly established. Composers structured their works around tonal plans that linked movements through related keys (B-flat major and G minor, for example, sharing a key signature) and conferred integrity to the whole, much like the acts of a play. Rhythm, melody and harmony combined to create not only "listenability" but an unmistakable emotional atmosphere; listeners, in their turn, took away the sense and emotion of a work as it was performed.

The apogee of such absolute music, Ms. Katz notes, was the classical period of Mozart and Haydn. With the onset of the Romantic movement in the 19th century, though, fundamental changes to musical grammar began to show themselves, transporting audiences into new sonic realms. Ms. Katz argues that such realms had less to do with deploying the coherent musical language of the past than with manipulating or exaggerating its grammar for the creation of effect. From critics and listeners, a chorus of complaints echoed Plato's of two millennia before.



Beethoven, in Ms. Katz's view, never damaged the system of harmonic tonality and "integrated" form, for all his iconoclasm. But a succession of composers—including Schumann, Liszt and, above all, Richard Wagner—chipped away at coherence by introducing unprepared and unresolved chords, chromatic alterations, and above all modulations into remote keys. With his "unendliche Melodie" (infinite melody) and other devices, Wagner savaged traditional musical structures even as he created astonishingly beautiful music. By the early 20th century composers like Schönberg and Scriabin had largely forsaken tonality. Audiences were left to fend for themselves.

The gulf between past and present widened as the 20th century progressed—but there were pockets of resistance, Ms. Katz observes. Debussy joined the moderns in rebelling against the constraints of harmonic tonality but found coherence in modal forms and in melodic tonality. Composers like Bartok, Ravel and Janacek, though also pushing the boundaries of traditional harmony, appealed to the ear by retaining crucial elements of traditional tonality. Oddly, atonality and aleatory music—both enjoying a vogue, among the elite, in early and mid-20th century—have failed to find any real momentum, even though they were viewed as contributions to musical "progress." In the meantime, earlier styles—from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, for instance—have captured the interest of serious listeners.

To be sure, "A Language of Its Own" is not a long moan about the rise and fall of Western music. Ms. Katz is an elegant analyst, not a polemicist. And she is hopeful that our musical tradition can regain its footing, perhaps by re-creating the "abstracting" process that allowed Western music, despite its inability to describe what it does, to beguile and fascinate us for so long.

Mr. Penrose is a writer in London.

time off

by William Westbrook

Beijing

THEATER

Fame the Musical: A musical set in a school for the performing arts, so the kids can sing and dance without seeming out of character. Based on the 1980 movie, which also spawned two TV series and a 2009 remake.
China Grand Theatre, 16 North Rd., West Third Ring; Feb. 7 to 9, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Admission: 180 yuan to 1,280 yuan.
☎ 86-400-707-9999
Web: www.ticketmaster.cn

Hong Kong

DANCE

Firecracker: Taking "The Nutcracker" as its base, Hong Kong-based choreographer Yuri Ng's work moves the uncle to the center, where he reminisces about his past—starting in 1967 Hong Kong and including Cantonese films, parade floats and Royal visits.
Studio Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon; Feb. 5, 7:30 p.m., and Feb. 6 and 7, 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Admission: HK$180 to HK$500.
☎ 852-2111-5999
Web: www.urbtix.hk

Singapore

THEATER

The Miser: A Molière comedy, barbed as usual, presented in French with English surtitles. This time the target is the rich widower of the title, who schemes to marry his son to a rich old widow and his daughter to a rich old man, while he himself marries young Marianne (as it happens, his son's true love). Not so fast, pops.
Alliance Française Theatre, 1 Sarkies Rd.; Feb. 3 to 5, 8 p.m.; Feb. 6, 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Admission: S$30.
☎ 65-6348-5555
Web: www.sistic.com

Tour: Asia

EXHIBITION

Balgo: This traveling exhibition—further stops include Hanoi, Beijing, New Delhi and Seoul—offers 26 acrylic paintings and prints by aboriginal artists from the Balgo Hills of Western Australia. The art, its patterns abstract but resembling features of the landscape, is celebrated for its energy and color.
Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 181 Zhong Shan North Rd., Section 3; to Feb. 21, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., to 8:30 p.m. Saturdays; closed Mondays.
Free admission.
☎ 886-2-2595-7656
Web: www.tfam.museum
Hong Kong: Visual Arts Centre, 7A Kennedy Rd., Central; March 10 to 21, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., closed Tuesdays.
Free admission.
☎ 852-2521 3008
Web: www.lcsd.gov.hk/apo

CONCERT

Belcea Quartet: With none of its members yet 40, the Belcea still counts as one of the new generation of string quartets, but it has now been piling up rave notices for a decade. It will alternate two programs, each featuring one work by Beethoven, Schubert and Bartók.
Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Filharmonik Petronas, Petronas Twin Towers; March 1, 8:30 p.m.
Admission: 60 ringgit to 220 ringgit.
☎ 60-3-2051-7007
Web: www.mpo.com.my
Beijing: Forbidden City Concert Hall, Zhongshan Park; March 7, 7:30 p.m.
Admission: 30 yuan to 580 yuan.
☎ 86-10-6417-7845
Web: www.piao.com.cn
Tokyo: Kioi Hall, 6-5 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku; March 10 and 11, 7 p.m.
Admission: 5,000 yen and 6,000 yen.
☎ 81-3-3237-0061
Web: www.kioi-hall.or.jp

Soundwave Festival (Gallows); Taipei Fine Arts Museum ('Kaningarra'); Almond Chu ('Firecracker')

Clockwise from above, Tour: Gallows, here dressed quietly, will play deafeningly across Australia and later stop in Tokyo; Tour: 'Kaningarra, Near the Canning Stock Route,' by Susie Bootja Bootja, from the exhibition 'Balgo: Contemporary Australian Art from the Balgo Hills'; Hong Kong: Liu Miao-miao conjures up Hong Kong's past in the ballet 'Firecracker.'

Tour: Asia/Australia

CONCERT

Gallows: A big label handed this hardcore punk quintet a wad of cash a couple of years ago but then dropped the band, leaving Gallows rich and free. So it still makes music that one fan—fan, mind you—describes as a punch in the face. The starting times listed refer to when festival gates open. The band will perform at other Soundwave festivals across Australia.
Sydney: Eastern Creek International Raceway, Brabham Drive/Ferrers Road, Eastern Creek; Feb. 21, 11 a.m.
Admission: A$151 and A$155.
Web: www.soundwavefestival.com
Tokyo: Tokyo: Makuhari Messe, 2-1 Nakase Mihama-ku, Chiba-city; April 4, 1 p.m.
Admission: 7,800 yen.
☎ 81-3-3462-6969
Web: www.punkspring.com

CONCERT

Whitney Houston: On the road after her first album in years—"I Look to You"; the tour is "Nothing But Love"—Ms. Houston tries to recover the magic that brought album sales in the tens of millions and awards by the hundred. Other stops include Melbourne and Osaka.
Seoul: Olympic 1 Gymnasium, Olympic Park, 88-2 Bangi-dong, Songpa-gu; Feb. 6 and 7, 7 p.m.
Admission: 70,000 won to 180,000 won.
☎ 82-2-538-8181
Web: ticket.yes24.com
Tokyo: Saitama Super Arena, 8 Shintoshin, Chuo-ku, Saitama-shi, Feb 11 and 13, 5 p.m.; Feb. 14, 4 p.m.
Admission: 10,000 yen to 24,000 yen.
☎ 81-3-3462-6969
Web: www.creativeman.co.jp
Sydney: Acer Arena, Olympic Boulevard, Sydney Olympic Park; Feb. 24, 7:45 p.m.
Admission: A$125 to A$195.
☎ 61-132-849
Web: www.ticketek.com.au